

https://theeagle.com/news/local/texas-a-m-remaining-students-adjust-to-largely-empty-campus/article_4c4b2a60-70ae-11ea-a2d7-273cb7598148.html

Texas A&M, remaining students adjust to largely empty campus

Megan Rodriguez

Mar 28, 2020



Kirk King, left, helps his daughter, Kathryn King, a Texas A&M freshman, move out of her dorm Thursday.

Photo by Laura McKenzie

Megan Rodriguez

Texas A&M University freshman Morgan Monschke is one of the few Aggies still living on campus now that classes are fully online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Late Friday afternoon she was spending time outside her northside dorm, Hullabaloo Hall, as other students moved out of surrounding buildings. She said all the roommates in her suite have left, but she opted to stay since she finds it easier to focus on her studies in College Station than when she's back in her hometown.

However, the atmosphere on campus is noticeably different, she said, remembering back to recent conversations of people in town who are concerned about losing their jobs and others who are missing their friends who moved.

"It's really weird and somber whenever I talk to people," Monschke said.

Of the 11,000 students who previously lived in the 50 dorms and apartments on campus, Director of Administrative and Support Services in the department of residence life Carol Binzer said there are an estimated 1,900 to 2,500 remaining. But the numbers are constantly changing, Binzer said, since there is a steady flow of Aggies leaving each day.

Prorated refunds are available for those who formally cancel their housing contract and submit a refund/credit preference form through the department of residence life. Binzer is handling special circumstances in which students cannot return to campus to retrieve their belongings until later in the semester but still want to cancel their contracts. Others who have moved but didn't return their room keys are asked to mail the key back with their name, hall and room number included.

Binzer said she and her team are doing their best to accommodate the students they care for so deeply.

A&M sophomore and Hughes Hall resident Joshua Vernon said most people stay in their dorms throughout the day and crowds that used to be in various parts of campus are nonexistent.

Places where people previously congregated on campus are limited now, according to A&M announcements and websites. Dining rooms aren't open, but to-go orders are still sold. Campus libraries, the Student Recreation Center and the book store and Copy Corner in the Memorial Student Center are all temporarily closed. The MSC also shortened the hours of operation and only permits access through certain entrances.

But Vernon said there are some things that remain the same.

“You see people at parks, you see people walking around campus,” Vernon said, “obviously in smaller amounts. ... With things changing from day to day, the way we go throughout our days is just finding normalcy and doing things to make life seem normal.”

Resources like the computer labs in dorms and apartments are still available and cleaned after each use, Binzer said.

Binzer said residence life is an auxiliary enterprise on campus, and refunding the majority of people who once lived on campus will be “a budgetary hit.” Utility costs will go down some, she said, but not a lot since there are some people in every building.

Rent rates have already been set for next year, so Binzer said this year's setbacks will not be pushed onto someone else. Some summer renovation projects may be delayed because there's a chance students will move out later than originally planned, she added.

As of Friday, Binzer said there have not been any positive COVID-19 cases identified as living on campus, but she and other officials are working on preparation plans for if that happens.

For freshman Walton Hall resident Sophie Rahman — who stayed in town for her job — it has become quiet and lonely in many ways, but she has seen students come together in spite of the drastic changes.

“I think we have more of a support group now that everyone is moving out,” Rahman said. “Those who are staying, we all know each other, so it is nice to have that.”

For more information on how to move out of A&M campus housing or other updates, visit **reslife.tamu.edu**.

Gallery: Few on campus at Texas A&M as Bryan-College Station community combats spread of the coronavirus

Texas A&M University

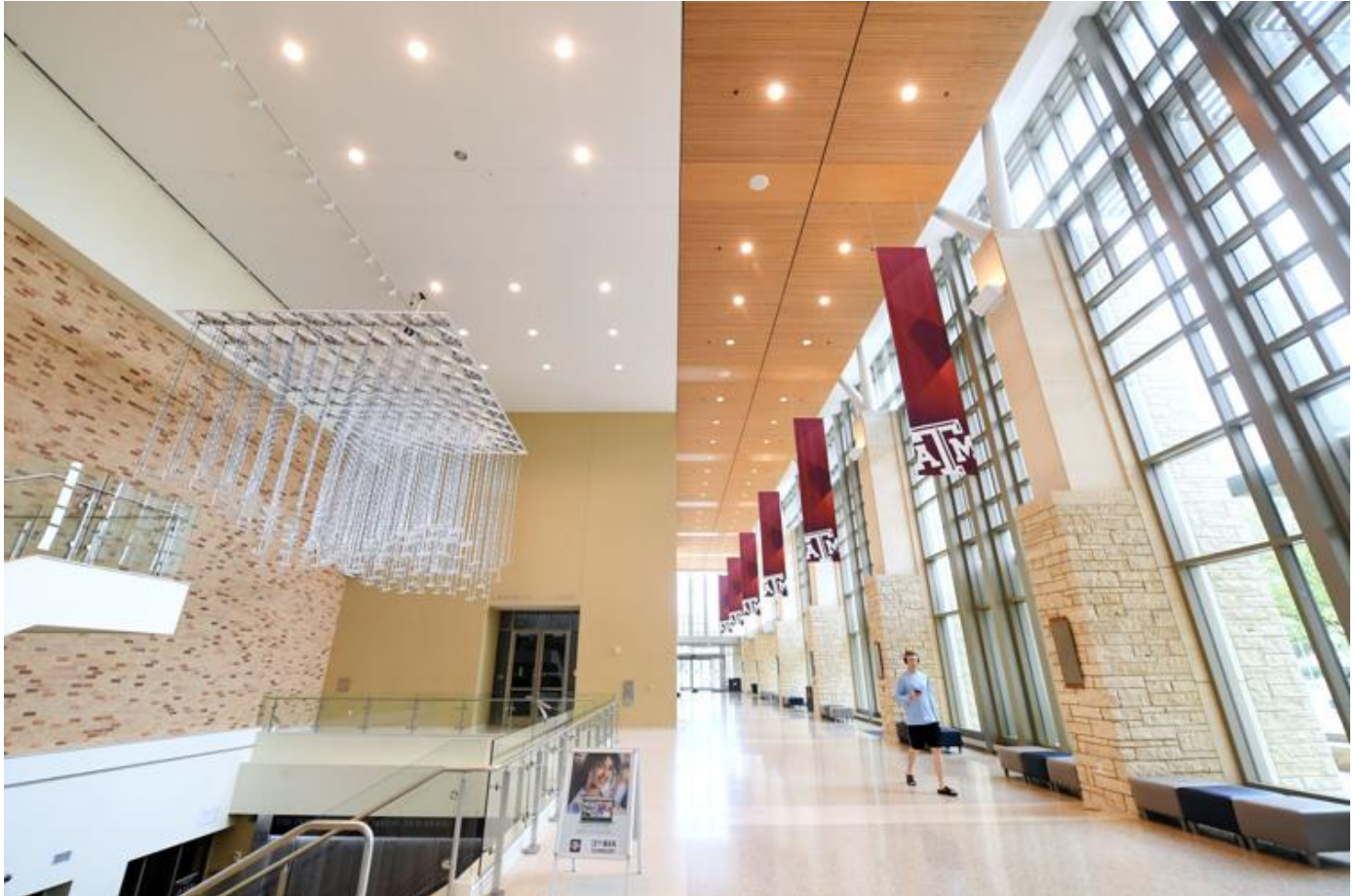


Photo by Laura McKenzie

Texas A&M University