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Flurry of complaints at college openings

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Snow removal crews worked on Harvard's campus Tuesday. While Harvard was closed, Boston College, Babson College, and Bentley and Brandeis universities all opened after a brief delay.

By Matt Rocheleau

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT FEBRUARY 11, 2015

Students, faculty, and staff at several Boston area colleges and universities criticized their schools for deciding to open Tuesday despite a crippling public transportation shutdown, parking restrictions, a state of emergency, and widespread calls for all but essential employees to stay home.

Boston College, Babson College, and Bentley and Brandeis universities all opened at midmorning Tuesday after a brief delay. Wellesley College opened for the entire day.

Most other area institutions were closed, including Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Boston, Northeastern, Suffolk, and Tufts universities. University of Massachusetts Boston, Emerson and Simmons colleges, and Berklee College of

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Music also shut down for the day.

“How is anyone supposed to get to class?” said Boston College professor Susan Michalczyk, who is president of the school’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

“You can’t walk on the sidewalks. There’s no place to park. The T is shut down.

“I think it’s dangerous,” she added. “The first priority should be safety.”

BC’s main campus, which has a Green Line trolley stop outside its Commonwealth Avenue gates, is near the boundaries of Boston, Newton, and Brookline, all of which closed their public school systems on Tuesday.

Several BC parking lots were closed initially Tuesday, but by early afternoon, all of the lots were open, and the school’s shuttle system was operating, said spokesman Jack Dunn. He said that about 85 percent of BC undergraduates live on campus, and most of the rest live “within walking distance.”

“In addition, because of our location, more of our employees drive to work than schools such as Harvard, Northeastern, and BU,” which Dunn said have a heavier reliance on public transportation.

“Our obligation as an educational institution is to hold classes whenever we can,” he said. “We made the decision to open because we listened to the forecast and it suggested today would be a 30-degree day with sunshine and the roads would be clear, and that proved to be true.”

BC sophomore Frank DiMartino said he disagreed with the decision to open Tuesday but noted that the conditions did not stop many of his classmates from venturing to class.

“Although many students were very frustrated with the decision, we accepted it and moved forward with it,” he said.

Both Brandeis, in Waltham, and Wellesley-based Babson said that while classes were being held, “any employee or student’s decision based upon individual circumstances will be respected.”

Wellesley College, however, took a different stance with its staff.

In a campuswide e-mail, Ben Hammond, the college’s vice president for finance and administration, wrote that “employees will need to make their own judgments (in consultation with their supervisor) about whether to stay home or to leave work early, and may use personal or vacation time should they do so.”

preparation, a degree that matters



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‘I think it’s dangerous. The first priority should be safety.’ --Susan Michalczyk, Boston College professor, criticizing her school’s decision to hold classes Tuesday amid a state of emergency

Hammond said in an interview that Wellesley tries to remain open whenever possible and that requiring staff to use vacation time or personal days if they stay home is a longstanding practice. Most staff made it to campus Tuesday, he said.

One Wellesley student said she did not mind the decision, since she lives on campus, but it was “unfair to the workers.”

“As someone from a working-class background, having to see the men and women working in the snow and having to come in despite the weather, it makes me kind of angry because it doesn’t take into account the obstacles they have to get to work,” said the student, a senior who asked not to be named because she worried administrators might punish her for speaking out.

Some of the colleges that closed, including Harvard, MIT, Suffolk, Berklee, and Emerson, said in announcements that the decision was largely dictated by factors beyond their control, namely the MBTA shutdown, municipal parking restrictions, and the governor’s declaration of a state of emergency.

Northeastern’s closure announcement said that although its “campuses are ready for operation thanks to the ongoing work of our snow team, the lack of public transportation options and the ongoing parking ban in the City of Boston will make it extremely difficult to get around on Tuesday.”

Weather resources:

- **Map: Snow totals in your town**
- **Map: Town-by-town temperatures in Greater Boston**
- **Map: Power outages in Mass.**
- **Traffic in Greater Boston**
- **Weather.gov: Map of storm advisories in Mass.**
- **Weather.gov: Hazardous weather outlook and advisories**
- **Weather.gov: Weather radar for the Northeast**
- **CBSBoston.com: School closings**
- **Massport.com: Departures from Logan**

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