

From: [Summers, Greg](#)
Subject: Academic Affairs Update, 07-03-20
Date: Friday, July 03, 2020 11:06:27 AM

Colleagues,

Happy Fourth of July, and happy mid-point of 2020! [Please insert your own wry comments here.]

As we move closer to finalizing plans for the fall semester, anxiety levels are only increasing and for good reason. We all know we cannot eliminate entirely the risks associated with teaching and learning in a COVID environment, but how best to minimize these risks is also unclear. We are doing our best to follow the guidance of health professionals and scientists, but this guidance continues to shift. And of course, the opinions of our many stakeholders are polarized and deeply conflicting. Just the morning, I spoke with a parent withdrawing his daughter because we aren't teaching entirely face-to-face. And we heard from a local Stevens Point resident who is understandably worried that if we open at all we will deepen the outbreak already taking place in the community. Such is the world we inhabit.

Regarding minimizing risk, here a few updates:

- We are still working to finalize a university statement to be included in all syllabi regarding the requirement to wear face coverings in campus buildings, including classrooms. The enforcement procedure has become especially complicated. We want very much to avoid employing heavy-handed strategies such as the involvement of campus security. However, we also want to empower faculty members to manage their classrooms without at the same time making them targets. Please know that we will have a university policy and that enforcement will be the university's responsibility. We should have a version of this material ready to share broadly soon.
- For students with disabilities, required face coverings will present some challenges to navigate. There are students who cannot wear a face covering due to their own conditions. The Disability and Assistive Technology Center (DATC) will work with them to strategize accommodations that balance their access needs with broader health/safety measures, including use of face shields or remote/online access. Face coverings also result in a communication barrier for people who are hard of hearing and read lips. The campus is securing a supply of face masks with a clear panel that DATC will distribute to impacted students and their instructors.
- During the early weeks of the pandemic, we heard widespread recommendations that the only way to reopen would be to conduct broad surveillance testing of asymptomatic people to track and contain the spread of COVID-19. Since then, however, the guidance on this question has changed, both for reasons of cost and logistics and also for reasons related to the efficacy of testing. Just this week, for example, the federal Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued more [detailed guidance for institutions of higher education on testing](#). The CDC recommends testing symptomatic students and those asymptomatic students with recent known or suspected exposure to COVID-19. However, the CDC does not recommend broader surveillance testing of asymptomatic individuals. UW-Stevens Point will conduct testing that follows these guidelines.

After the holiday, I'll be setting up some weekly Zoom conversations open to the department chairs and directors throughout Academic Affairs, a group of more than sixty people. The meetings will not be mandatory, but I want to create more opportunities to discuss these kinds of issues as the fall approaches. If there are specific issues you'd like to address, please let your supervisor know. Again, we cannot eliminate the risks we face in the months ahead, nor the anxieties these risks will foster. But the more we talk about them, the better we can address and manage them.

Thanks very much. Have a great holiday weekend.

Greg

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