

From: [Summers, Greg](#)
Subject: Academic Affairs Update, 07-10-20
Date: Friday, July 10, 2020 12:52:10 PM
Attachments: [Guidance to Faculty and Instructors Regarding Face Coverings in the Classroom.docx](#)

Colleagues,

We have reached the end of another busy week, and as a result (and with apologies), the update below is rather lengthy. I want to begin by noting that we had our first weekly discussion with deans, department chairs, and directors in Academic Affairs on Wednesday. We spent close to ninety minutes talking through a variety of issues related to the fall semester, and I am grateful for the collective wisdom and input that everyone provided. These discussions will continue each Wednesday throughout the summer, so if you have specific questions you'd like raised and clarified, please let your supervisors know. You can also continue emailing me directly with questions and concerns.

Here are some updates from the week, beginning with some highly encouraging news:

- **President Thompson and Surveillance Testing.** The UW System provosts had a chance to talk briefly with Interim UW System President Thompson, and I'm happy to report that he's coming to the role with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm, and a strong focus on rebuilding relationships with the state government. His initial priority is opening in-person as safely as possible this fall, and particularly to raise enough funding for much broader surveillance testing than we could afford on our own. He's been calling hospital systems across the state and seeking their partnership in a major testing effort that would include not just the symptomatic students and close contacts that I mentioned last week, but also students in the residence halls, athletes, and performing arts students. [He is seeking \\$110M from state and federal officials to fund this safe opening:](#) \$60M for testing and another \$50M for PPE, cleaning supplies, and other expenses. He cannot guarantee this funding, but he expressed optimism that it might be possible, perhaps with help from a new federal relief package being contemplated in the U.S. Senate. All of this is encouraging, so please stay tuned.
- **Inconvenient Truths.** Despite all our work and planning to open safely in the fall, we're all watching the virus continue to spread dramatically across the country. Several people have rightly asked this week at what point does it become too risky to resume in-person teaching, or by what standards might we have to make this decision later this fall if conditions grow worse. The answer to these questions is complicated. Last spring, most states, including Wisconsin, established clear criteria for re-opening. In recent weeks, nearly all these same states, including Wisconsin, have re-opened despite the inconvenient truth that very few have come close to meeting these benchmarks. This makes clear another inconvenient but understandable truth: such decisions are obviously as much political choices as they are based in science and health-related metrics. Please know that I share this concern. I've been asking and will continue to ask these same questions. And together, we will work toward clearer answers despite the many pressures involved.
- **Face Coverings in the Classroom.** Among the issues we discussed on Wednesday was the complicated topic of enforcing the university's face covering requirement in classroom settings. Please find attached the guidance that I mentioned last week, which includes both standardized language that will be required in each course syllabus as well

as scripted guidance for discussion with students, including those who may initially be reluctant to comply. Again, the goal has been to avoid confrontation if possible while at the same time making clear that the university intends to enforce the mandate. I have left the “Draft” label on the document since I’m sure we may continue to discuss and revise it slightly in the weeks ahead. However, I think it’s important to share this guidance broadly now to assist in planning. We will aim to have a final version circulated again by July 31.

- **Facilities Update.** Our colleagues in Facilities have begun prepping classrooms for the required physical distancing. At UW-Stevens Point, we have used “bubble diagrams” to map each room using circles with a radius of 4.5 feet. In practice, this will ensure the recommended 6 feet of separation between each person. The custodial staff has begun rearranging the furniture in these rooms with the new physical distancing requirements. For those rooms likely not to be used, this may involve removing and relocating desks, chairs, and other furniture to the new instructional spaces that we are setting up to accommodate classes. The custodial team will advise the Primary Building Contacts designated for each university building when these changes are being made, but I wanted everyone to know that such work is taking place in case you notice the changes and have questions.

- **The Role of Student Health.** As we move toward fall, many people are likely to have health-related questions regarding COVID-19. Please know that our Student Health Service exists primarily to serve student needs, and they do not have staff available to assist with employee concerns. Consequently, we are likely to share the guidance below repeatedly in the weeks ahead:
 - UWSP Students:
 - Please call Student Health Service (715-346-4646) if you have a positive screening or if you have COVID-19 or other health-related questions.
 - UWSP Employees:
 - If you have a positive screening or have COVID-related concerns or questions, please contact your personal health care provider or call one of the COVID hotlines:
 - Ascension COVID-19 Hotline (24/7) 1-833-981-0711
 - Marshfield Clinic COVID-19 Helpline (24/7) 1-877-998-0880
 - Aspirus COVID-19 Hotline (Monday-Friday 7am-7pm & Saturday-Sunday 8am-5pm) 1-844-568-0701

I thank you all once again for the work you are doing in difficult circumstances. I hope everyone is finding time to do fun things away from worry. This week, for example, I completed my first-ever batch of homemade wine. My fingers are crossed (on a number of fronts) that by December I can enjoy a glass, and that it’s drinkable!

Take good care.

Greg

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