



University Relations

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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News Release

UW System to accelerate COVID-19 testing for spring 2021

MADISON, Wis.—University of Wisconsin System President Tommy Thompson today announced residential undergraduate students will be tested for COVID-19 at least once per week during the spring 2021 semester. In addition, all non-residential students, faculty, and staff will be tested at least once every two weeks.

The requirement will apply to all UW System universities except UW-Madison, which is developing its own testing program. Implementation of the testing plan will be individually managed by the universities.

“Frequent testing is critical to minimizing the spread of COVID-19,” Thompson said. “We have demonstrated at our universities, where the positivity rate has hovered around 3 percent for weeks, that routine testing is a difference maker. The UW System’s testing program has been pivotal toward ensuring a successful in-person fall semester, and we will do even more this spring given how well it has gone.”

Studies show and experts agree that in addition to the individual behaviors of wearing masks, maintaining social distance, and hand washing, regular testing makes a significant impact in combating the virus. In praising the UW System testing program during a recent visit to Wisconsin this fall, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Robert Redfield said the presence of frequent testing on UW campuses itself signaled to students, faculty, and staff the importance of masking, distance, and hand washing.

“Frequent testing has helped us create a culture of responsibility on our campuses,” Thompson said. “I am very proud of how our students have responded to the challenges facing them this fall.”

Under the spring 2021 testing program, faculty and staff who are not working on campus will not need to be tested according to the program requirements.

Additional details of the testing program continue to be developed.

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The University of Wisconsin System serves approximately 165,000 students. Awarding nearly 37,000 degrees annually, the UW System is Wisconsin’s talent pipeline, putting graduates in position to increase their earning power, contribute to their communities, and make Wisconsin a better place to live. Nearly 90 percent of in-state UW System graduates stay in Wisconsin five years after earning a degree. The UW System provides a 23:1 return on state investment. UW System institutions also contribute to the richness of Wisconsin’s culture and economy with groundbreaking research, new companies and patents, and boundless creative intellectual energy.

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