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COVID-19 Campus Update, February 11, 2021

Eastern Michigan University

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COVID-19 Campus Update – Feb. 11, 2021

Thursday, February 11, 2021

To the Eastern Michigan University community:

As we persevere through the rather typical February in Michigan deep freeze, I hope you, your friends and families are staying safe and warm. The cold weather looks to be with us for a while, so please take appropriate precautions.

To begin this week's update, I would like to thank the many people on the University's COVID-19 response team who have been operating on overdrive for the past two weeks as the number of positive cases among our community spiked. Thanks to the response team's tireless, determined and strategic efforts, our case numbers stabilized and over the past week have dropped considerably. You will see the numbers below in the weekly dashboard update – but I would be remiss in not acknowledging the extraordinary efforts by team members in addressing positive cases, quarantining students when necessary, and conducting contact tracing to identify and isolate other potential cases.

We have several items to cover in this week's message:

- COVID-19 Dashboard
- COVID-19 Testing Changes
- Washtenaw County Health Department Vaccination Update
- Senate Testimony: Pandemic Impact at Michigan Public Universities
- Black History Month Update
- Lunar New Year
- Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence
- Health and Safety Reminder

COVID-19 Dashboard

In the seven days ending Feb. 9, the University administered 1,683 COVID-19 tests that resulted in 29 positive cases, for a positivity rate of 1.72 percent. During this time, we confirmed a total of 43 positive cases. This compares to 82 positive cases during the week of Jan. 27 – Feb. 2, and 58 total positive cases during the week of Jan. 20 – Jan. 26.

Of the 43 cases reported last week, 21 were students who live off-campus and had no contact with campus prior to the time they tested positive and 14 were on-campus students – defined as a student who was living on campus or had visited campus during the applicable time period prior to the time they tested positive. Eight cases were reported among University employees.

Since Aug. 12, the University has administered a total of 22,969 tests that resulted in 310 positive results for an overall positivity rate of 1.35 percent. Our positive rate is

considerably lower than state and national tracking. Complete details can be found on the University's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

We continue to work closely with the Washtenaw County Health Department and appreciate its support of our actions to address the current caseload.

COVID-19 Testing Process

The University's new and expanded testing location inside the Student Center, in the former Amazon location, is allowing us to increase our testing capacity as planned. We are in our second week of operations at this location. Next week, we will transition to a new COVID-19 test – [Abbott BinaxNow](#). It is a non-invasive, shallow nostril swab that is self-administered (with observers present) that circulates around the circumference of the lower nostril area. It is not the more invasive stick swab that goes deep into the nasal cavity.

Abbott BinaxNow is the primary test used by the federal government, and was just recently permitted to be used by other organizations. A key benefit of the test is the rapid results -- within a few hours via an online portal. This compares to previous tests in which results were not available for 48-72 hours. It is also available at a lower cost, allowing the University to purchase a greater quantity of tests, significantly expand the number of tests conducted, and increase the frequency of testing. This is particularly important for our mandatory testing process for higher risk populations (housing, dining, etc.)

Consistent with all of our past testing, these new tests are free to students and employees and are provided at University expense as part of our #EMUSafe efforts.

Abundant signage, an instruction video and personal assistance are available at the Student Center location to help make it a fast and easy process. Please continue to monitor your emich email for updates on the scheduling of tests and the hours of operation of this testing facility.

Washtenaw County Health Department Vaccination Update

The University's Convocation Center continues to host Washtenaw County's only mass vaccination clinic. Beginning next Tuesday, the clinic will be expanded to include St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor vaccination operations. The Convocation Center has proved to be a key resource in this process due to its size and ease of access (parking and proximity to highways). We are proud to support this critical community initiative. The expanded vaccination clinic, and ongoing partnership with the Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD) and St. Joe's, are reflective of Eastern's overall mission and support of the greater community. This is yet another example of the national recognition and rationale behind the University's Carnegie Classification in Community Engagement. Vaccine appointments will remain by appointment only through the

WCHD registration website. Complete details and appointment registration information can be found in the [news release](#) on EMU Today.

Senate Testimony: Pandemic Impact at Michigan's Public Universities

This afternoon I had the opportunity to testify, virtually, before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Universities and Community Colleges. I testified on behalf of the state's 15 public universities, which are represented by the Michigan Association of State Universities (MASU). I outlined the dramatic negative consequences of the pandemic to the financial bottom line of Michigan's universities, while providing an overview of the extraordinary efforts by universities to transition to online classes and provide a safe environment. I also emphasized the toll the pandemic is taking on our students. My final comments were directed toward support for prioritizing faculty and staff personnel at Michigan universities for earlier vaccinations, given their interaction with student populations on campus. A comprehensive overview of my testimony is available in this [EMU Today news release](#).

Black History Month

Black History Month activities are underway. The theme for EMU's 2021 Black History Month celebration is "A Tribute to our Blackness." Upcoming Black History Month events are listed below. Please visit the [Black History Month news release on EMU Today](#) for additional details about the events and registration information.

- Thursday, Feb. 18, 6 p.m.: Black History Month Jeopardy
- Thursday, Feb. 18, 6 - 8 p.m.: The State of Civil Rights in America: What Does the Future Portend?
- Thursday, Feb. 18, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.: Star Lecture Series: An Ordinary Black Woman's Journey toward Social Justice and Empowerment
- Wednesday, February 24, 7 p.m.: Who Will Save American Democracy? The Role of Women, Young Voters and People of Color in American Politics
- Thursday, February 25, 4 - 5:30 p.m.: Lost Opportunity: Willis Ward, the Strike at Willow Run, and the Rise of Civil Rights Unionism in Detroit

Extended interviews with EMU leaders will be featured on the University's [Facebook](#) page and [YouTube](#) channel. Please follow those sites for updates.

For more information on EMU events, always visit the [EMU Today calendar](#).

Lunar New Year

Tomorrow, February 12, 2021, marks the beginning of the Chinese New Year; this year is the Year of the Ox. The ox is known for diligence, dependability, strength and determination. These are the qualities we all hope to build on as we begin the transition from a pandemic to a return to a new normal of sorts, not only at EMU but nationwide. The Asian population in the United States exceeds 23 million and, of that, the Asian

population in the U.S. that are Chinese or of Chinese descent exceeds 5.2 million according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

I send my warmest wishes to our alumni across Asia, and our students, faculty, staff and alumni here in Michigan and throughout the country as we begin the Lunar New Year and, of course, welcome in the Year of the Ox. From the lion dances in San Francisco to festivals in Atlanta and parades in New York City and Washington, D.C., Americans of Asian descent carry on the vibrant traditions of their past generations and enrich America's cultural diversity. I hope all those celebrating the New Year enjoy peace, prosperity, and good health in the many days ahead.

新春愉快， 牛年大吉

Swoop's Food Pantry Update

The winter hours for the John and Angie Sabo Swoop's Food Pantry Room are Mondays 12 - 5 p.m., Wednesdays 12 - 6:30 p.m., and Thursdays 12 - 5 p.m.

Shoppers are requested to complete an [Online Shopping Request Form](#) before arriving. Items will be bagged by staff and brought out to clients when they arrive. Visitors to Swoop's can enter through the main entrance on the north side of Pierce Hall near the elevator. Swoop's requires any student who has not used the pantry this year to complete the new [2020-21 Swoop's Food Pantry Intake Form](#).

The items most needed this week are: rice, ramen, grape jelly, large snacks and hot chocolate.

If you wish to donate items, please email swoops_pantry@emich.edu in advance to make sure someone is present to handle your delivery. Please maintain physical distancing when picking up or delivering items to the Pantry.

Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence

Please join me in celebrating these fine examples of Eastern excellence:

- Summit Street, an Eastern Michigan University student a cappella group, has qualified to compete in the quarterfinals of the International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella Tournament on Saturday, March 13. Established in 2019, Summit Street is a TTBB (tenor, tenor, baritone, bass) a cappella group, which is traditionally an all-men's chorus. However, aligned with EMU's mission to foster a diverse and inclusive community, the singing group is open to anyone regardless of identification. The group currently consists of 13 singing members and three tech members who assist with all aspects of recording, video production and more. The [EMU Today story](#) has more details about the group and the upcoming competition.
- The [latest episode of EMU Today TV](#) highlights the University's Master of Science in Finance program (MSF), with special guest Associate Professor of Finance Karen Ann Craig. The MSF program, started in fall 2019, is AACSB-accredited and STEM-

designated, and is designed for recent graduates and working professionals. The second segment features Gregory Peoples, 2020 recipient of the Alumni Association's John W. Porter Distinguished Service Award, and Emeritus Dean of Students and University Ombudsman. Peoples is a student affairs professional with more than 40 years of experience as a university administrator.

- Ingrid Saunders Jones, who earned a Master's degree in education at Eastern in 1972, is an industry and civic leader who has helped open paths for African Americans and women. From 1982 to 2013, Saunders Jones held a number of positions with the Coca-Cola Company and the Coca-Cola Foundation, which are based in Atlanta, where she still lives. She retired in 2013 as senior vice president of global community connections with the company and as chair of the Coca-Cola Foundation. You can read more about Ingrid Saunders Jones and her thoughts on Black History Month in the [story on EMU Today](#).

Congratulations to those students, faculty and alumni who represent Eastern so well!

Health and Safety Reminder

An important reminder as I conclude. Please continue to:

- Practice effective hand washing and the use of hand sanitizers;
- Wear face coverings; and,
- Observe physical distancing.

These three actions, when taken together, dramatically reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19.

I thank you for your work on behalf of the University and your ongoing support of our #EMUSafe initiatives. Please continue to follow the [University's COVID-19 Planning and Preparedness website](#) for ongoing updates.

James Smith, Ph.D.