

2021

## COVID-19 Campus Update, March 4, 2021

Eastern Michigan University

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## COVID-19 Campus Update – March 4, 2021

Thursday, March 4, 2021

To the Eastern Michigan University community:

The combination of spring-like weather and President Biden's update on Tuesday that there will be a sufficient supply of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of May for all American adults who wish to be vaccinated has created hope that we've moved through the most critical stages of the pandemic. While there have been positive signs along the way, this is the strongest indication that the heartbreaking impact of the disease – the enormous death toll, hospitalizations and the destructive effect on lives, jobs and economy – may finally be waning.

I am reminded, however, that it is far too early to let our guard down. The disease is still spreading – yesterday there were more than 65,000 new cases in the U.S., and more than 2,300 deaths.

The biggest factors to slowing the spread, in addition to the increasing number of vaccinations, remain physical distancing, the proper wearing of face coverings, and washing hands frequently and using hand sanitizer. We do not take these matters lightly. We ask every Eagle to continue to do their part to ensure positive cases continue to decline, that we keep one another safe, and that we do not senselessly create any super-spreader events.

I was pleased to tour our testing operation at the Student Center and the Washtenaw County Health Department's vaccination clinic at the Convocation Center yesterday with new Regent Dr. Jessie Kimbrough Marshall. It is always gratifying to see these efforts in action and it is a great reminder of our commitment to the breadth of work needed to keep everyone safe.

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

- COVID-19 Dashboard
- COVID-19 Testing
- Summer and Fall Semester Planning
- Women's History Month Programming Begins
- Legendary Coach Bob Parks Remembered
- Peace Corps Turns 60
- Swoop's Food Pantry Update
- Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence
- Health and Safety Reminder

COVID-19 Dashboard

In the seven days ending March 2, the University administered 1,087 COVID-19 tests that resulted in two positive cases, for a positivity rate of 0.18 percent. During this time, we confirmed a total of six positive cases.

Since Aug. 12, the University has administered a total of 26,605 tests with 325 positive results for an overall positivity rate of 1.22 percent -- considerably lower than state and national tracking. Complete details can be found on [the University's COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

## COVID-19 Testing

We continue to provide free COVID-19 testing at the Student Center at University expense. Next week the testing center will be open Tuesday – Thursday, from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. The testing process is fast and easy; results are provided within a matter of hours. If you have already been tested, you can be tested again. We encourage frequent testing. You must register in advance; on-site registration is not permitted. Please visit [emich.edu/covid-testing](https://emich.edu/covid-testing) to complete your profile and reserve a time. Student Body President Luis Romero explains the easy testing process in this video. Visit the testing FAQ if you have additional questions.

## Summer and Fall Semester Planning

Planning for the summer and fall semesters is ongoing. The class schedule for Summer A will be similar to last summer – nearly all classes will be taught online. Summer B will also be similar to last summer – with more in-person classes but with the large majority of those classes being online.

We are proceeding with fall semester planning. Our baseline fall schedule plan provides for a greater number of online/remote courses than have been offered in pre-COVID years and an increased number of in-person courses than this past year. Student data nationwide indicate a strong desire for in-person college choices for the fall semester, particularly traditional first-year students entering from high school, but also a different balance of online and in-person overall. We are creating two alternative scheduling scenarios that could be implemented should public health conditions, especially the vaccination process, not proceed as currently predicted. We will publish the baseline schedule but review the situation carefully as the summer semester begins and adjust as needed.

The pandemic has been marked by progress and setbacks. We are approaching our planning carefully, with safety at the forefront and an understanding that changing circumstances will require adjustments in our overall operations. I ask that our community members remain flexible and understanding in the face of the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic.

## Women's History Month Programs Begin

- Sunday, March 7, 3 p.m.: The EMU Center for Jewish Studies presents “Mira Awad: A Concert/Conversation.” The Israeli/Palestinian singer-songwriter, actress, artist and content creator will perform and speak to attendees. This free event will be streamed live on EMU’s Facebook and YouTube pages.
- Monday, March 8, 5:30-7 p.m.: The Global Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women: Intersections of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Work and Immigration.
- Thursday, March 11, 5-6:30 p.m.: Women’s Leadership Panel: The Black Honors Student Organization will celebrate Women’s History Month with a Women’s Leadership Panel that will bring together six inspiring women of color to share their experiences and journeys to leadership positions. They will discuss several topics, ranging from diversity, equity and inclusion, resilience, newly entering the workforce, strengths and failures, inspirations, and more.

Registration details and Zoom information for these events, along with the complete lineup of Women’s History Month programs, can be found on [the Women’s History Month story on EMU Today](#).

### Legendary Coach Bob Parks Remembered

It is with a heavy heart that I share the news that legendary track & field and cross country coach Bob Parks passed away yesterday at the age of 90. He is the most decorated coach in Eastern Michigan Athletics history. His teams captured 31 MAC titles and he was named MAC Coach of the Year 22 times. Under his coaching, EMU teams won six NAIA and NCAA team titles; he was named NCAA National Coach of the Year once and Regional Coach of the Year nine times. Parks was a collegiate runner at Eastern Michigan from 1951-55 and was the head men’s track & field and cross country coach for 34 years (1967-2001). He retired having established a tradition of success within the Eagles cross country and track and field programs. Our deepest condolences go to all who knew and worked with him, particularly to his family and daughter Sue Parks, the current Director of Eastern’s Cross Country and Track & Field teams. Further details about Coach Parks’ life and career can be found in [the EMU Athletics news release](#).

### Peace Corps Turn 60

This week marks the 60th anniversary of the Peace Corps, the special volunteer federal program that provides vital international social and economic development assistance around the world. In addition to the various EMU students, faculty and staff who’ve served in the Peace Corps, I’d like to recognize a particular group of returning volunteers.

Students in our Peace Corps Coverdell Fellows program are Peace Corps volunteers who have returned and are supported in earning a Master’s in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MA-TESOL), while continuing their service in local underserved communities. The program is part of our distinguished Department of

World Languages. These students include: Nick Russon, Laura Hancock, Kit Tetmeyer, Jacob Johnston, John Mask, Brian Rankin, Tara Ancone, and Briahna Anders.

On this special occasion marking the Peace Corps' founding, which was first announced by President John F. Kennedy on the steps of the Michigan Union in Ann Arbor, I salute these students for their service, along with the rest of our EMU community that has taken part in this remarkable worldwide effort.

### 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 Swoop's Food Pantry Intake Form](#).

Swoop's is focusing on school supplies this week, and is seeking donations of notebooks, sticky notes, highlighters, loose-leaf paper and small (2" or less) binders.

If you wish to donate items, please email [swoops\\_pantry@emich.edu](mailto: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.

Swoop's is conducting a campus-wide event this month and shared this message to our community:

Instead of a March Madness competition this year, let's come together in unity to make progress in fighting food insecurity on EMU's campus!

This means not only stocking the pantry with food but also making sure EMU students know about and can access the pantry.

Ways you can help:

- Share information about Swoop's Food Pantry with students by sharing information. Swoop's is available for any student!
- Make cash donations to the [EMU Foundation](#) so that Swoop's can purchase nutritious food, personal hygiene and household items (please indicate in the comments which department or building you represent).
- Donate items by shopping & dropping items to the pantry (or requesting a porch pickup) or by using the [Amazon Wish List](#) (please indicate in the order what building or department you represent).

Swoop's will be tracking donations by building/department and reporting out the results for those who would like to know.

Please share this information with those in your building or department, and please reach out with any questions.

Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence

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

- Our Clinical Research Administration graduate program is [the third highest ranked program in the United States and number one in Michigan](#) according to Bestvalueschools.org, which rates various university programs throughout the country. The program has consistently been ranked as one of the top of its kind in the United States by a variety of national educational reference sources. Dr. Jean Rowan, program director of the Clinical Research Administration Program, notes that this was one of the first academic programs developed in the discipline. It offers small class sizes with well-qualified, experienced faculty. “We are pleased to be recognized in various forums as one of the best places in America to obtain a Master of Science degree in Clinical Research Administration,” Dr. Rowan said. “Such honors speak to our continued leadership and excellence in the field. Our graduates now hold key roles at medical research centers, contract research organizations and pharmaceutical and medical device companies in the US and internationally.”
- [A nutrition team has received a \\$4,000 grant](#) to improve access to healthy local foods and develop greater food and agricultural literacy in seeking to reduce health disparities in the low-income Asian American population in Kent County. The Association of State Public Health Nutritionists “Farm to Early Care and Education Capacity Building Grant” was awarded in January and will run through July 2021.
- The team is from the [University’s Center for Health Disparities Innovations and Studies \(CHDIS\)](#), which aims to improve the lives of various communities by reducing racial and ethnic disparities in Michigan. “This initiative will be beneficial to the children in this community, as they will be exposed to local, nutritious foods and edible gardening, and will be provided a chance to learn about food and agriculture,” said Dr. Olivia Ford, co-leader of the team along with Dr. Alice Jo Rainville, a fellow professor of nutrition and dietetics.

Congratulations to the students, faculty, staff 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.