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COVID-19 Campus Update, March 25, 2021

Eastern Michigan University

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COVID-19 Campus Update – March 25, 2021

Thursday, March 25, 2021

To the Eastern Michigan University community:

In light of the lawsuit filed yesterday on behalf of several sexual assault survivors, I want to reiterate my deep and unwavering support for all victims of sexual assault, and my commitment to do everything I can to ensure a safe environment for our students.

The survivors who have come forward are showing incredible bravery in choosing to tell their stories. Although the University did not know about most of these cases at the time, we believe the claims of assault and are sickened to think that these events could have transpired on or around our campus community.

In addition to our primary objective of supporting survivors, two further points are important to highlight in this matter: 1) Our campus is safe; and 2) Any accusations that the University covered up such crimes are false.

As I stated in [my message to campus yesterday](#), there is no place for sexual violence within our community and we will always take swift action to stop it. An important part of that commitment is communicating with students, faculty, staff and the community whenever something like this occurs, as well as providing information about the University's handling of such cases.

Upon learning about these reported assaults last fall, and as [announced in September 2020](#), we undertook a thorough, independent external review of our Title IX and surrounding practices during the period in question. We engaged the national firm of Cozen O'Connor -- a specialist in Title IX work -- to help us in this important effort. We are committed to knowing if our processes related to these cases were followed by University employees and, if not, why not and what steps should be taken to ensure that our students are protected and supported. We are similarly committed to full transparency in this process. To that end, as indicated last September, the Cozen O'Connor report will be made public when it is finalized later this spring.

In the meantime, we have prepared an extensive [set of questions and answers](#) to provide more perspective about the lawsuit and invite you to review it in detail.

How to report a sexual assault

Eastern Michigan University takes all claims of sexual assault and sexual misconduct seriously and is committed to the thorough investigation of these incidents. Anyone who has information or wishes to report an incident of sexual assault or misconduct is encouraged to contact EMU Police at [734-487-1222](tel:734-487-1222) or at dps_questions@emich.edu, or file an incident report with [the EMU Title IX Office](#).

I have several additional updates to share this week:

- Michigan COVID-19 Cases Increase
- COVID-19 Dashboard
- Free COVID-19 Testing
- Washtenaw County Vaccination Tracking
- Give Rise: The Campaign for EMU
- April Graduation – Tomorrow’s Deadline for Inclusion in Celebration Video/Website
- Swoop’s Food Pantry Update
- Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence
- Health and Safety Reminder

Michigan COVID-19 Cases Increase

Michigan has seen a sharp increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in recent weeks. As more older adults are vaccinated, the number of cases among younger adults is spiking. Yesterday, Michigan reported its highest single-day total in new cases since mid-December. This is a critical reminder that now is not the time to back away from safe practices. Wear face coverings. Maintain physical distancing. Wash your hands frequently and use hand sanitizer. Get vaccinated when you are eligible. Let’s keep one another safe.

COVID-19 Dashboard

In the seven days ending March 23, the University administered 1,262 COVID-19 tests that resulted in three positive cases, for a positivity rate of 0.24 percent. During this time, we confirmed a total of 18 positive cases. Since Aug. 12, the University has administered a total of 30,058 tests with 337 positive results for an overall positivity rate of 1.12 percent -- considerably lower than state and national tracking. Complete details can be found on the [University's COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

Free Covid-19 Testing

We continue to provide free COVID-19 testing at the Student Center at University expense, and we are pleased to announce expanded testing hours. Testing is now available on Mondays beginning next week, from 12 p.m. - 4 p.m. The Testing Center is also open Tuesdays from 9 - 2 p.m., Wednesdays from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., and Thursdays from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Students who get tested are automatically entered to win a special prize package - next week it is provided by EMU Dining. It includes an Echo Dot, and a snack and swag bag!

You do not need to have symptoms or concerns that you have been exposed to the virus in order to be tested. All students, faculty and staff are encouraged to get tested, and to test frequently, regardless of how you feel. The testing process is fast and easy;

results are provided within a matter of hours. Remember, you may be tested multiple times.

You must register in advance; on-site registration is not permitted. Please visit emich.edu/covid-testing to complete your profile and reserve a time.

Student Body President Luis Romero shows how easy the testing process is in this [video](#). Visit the [testing FAQ](#) if you have additional questions.

Washtenaw County Vaccination Tracking

We continue to see encouraging news on the vaccination front. As of March 23, Washtenaw County reported 78% of residents 65 or older had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. That's up from 74.1% last week. For residents 16 and over, 32.4% had received at least one dose – up from 27.7%. The data are being refreshed regularly – visit the [WCHD vaccination tracking site](#) for ongoing updates.

Give Rise: The Campaign for EMU

At Eastern Michigan University, we are proud of what we have created, we are proud of who we have become, and we are excited about where we are going.

Earlier today we celebrated the virtual kickoff of the \$100 million Give Rise Campaign. We are thrilled that so many of our colleagues and students are highlighted in this celebration. Here are just a few of them:

- Dr. Anne Casper and Dr. Paul Price researching ways to create new antibiotics.
- Dr. Sarah Cox and Dr. Rema Reynolds talking about the impact teachers can have in the classroom and the community.
- Dr. Bud Gibson providing a glimpse at the impressive Center for Digital Engagement and how it has grown into a powerhouse for professional guidance to EMU students.
- Dr. Linda Myler and Dr. Kathleen Seuryneck bringing us into the IEP Simulation experience at St. Joe's and the transformative education our students receive in healthcare programs.
- Dean Mohamad Qatu walking us through all the beautiful enhancements to the GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology.
- Our students speaking on what makes EMU special, with an encore performance by members of the EMU Marching Band.
- And, much more!

To join us in the celebration, please [watch the Give Rise launch video](#).

We look forward to ongoing communication with you as we continue to celebrate in the days and weeks ahead, as we Give Rise to EMU!

April Graduation – Tomorrow’s Deadline for Inclusion in Celebration Video/Website

As previously communicated, we are planning several activities to celebrate our graduating students. A formal ceremony video will be posted at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, April 25. Graduates, families and friends can view the video at that time, or anytime after, at their convenience on the University’s YouTube channel.

Students who apply to graduate by tomorrow, March 26, will have their names included in the formal video and posted on the Commencement website. Students should apply for the month they are graduating – whether April or August. August graduates who apply by March 26, as noted above, will be included in the April celebration.

Please visit [the Records and Registration graduation website](#) to apply for graduation and to find other details and deadlines. Also visit the [Commencement website](#) for ongoing updates about the ceremony as well as the distribution of diplomas and the ordering of regalia.

We are planning on having in-person graduation celebrations at a later date for all graduates who have not had an in-person experience due to the pandemic. We are hopeful this will take place during our fall commencement, depending on public health considerations and the removal of restrictions for large gatherings.

Swoop’s Food Pantry Update

The hours for the John and Angie Sabo Swoop’s Food Pantry Room have changed slightly. Mondays are now 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. beginning next week, Wednesdays 12 - 6:30 p.m. and Thursdays 12 - 5 p.m. remain the same.

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 seeking milk, rice, notebooks, large snacks and microwave-ready meals.

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.

Monetary donations can be made [online](#).

Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence

We are pleased to celebrate these examples of Eastern Excellence:

- Student David DeLisle, who is pursuing a degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering, won the first prize award for Best Student Paper in the American Society for Engineering Education North Central Section Conference. His paper was "Control System Integration for Automating an Electric Golf Cart."
- David was also selected as the GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology Outstanding Electrical Engineering/Computer Engineering Student for this academic year. He plans to apply to graduate schools to further his education in Electrical Engineering and electric vehicles. His long-term goal is to earn a Ph.D. and work with a university or automotive manufacturer to create the next generation of electric and autonomous vehicles.
- Two of the University's brightest stars have been honored by the Michigan Chronicle in its Women of Excellence for 2021 awards. Board of Regents Chair Eunice Jeffries and Dr. Rema Reynolds, associate professor in Leadership and Counseling, are among those selected for the honor from hundreds of nominees. The Michigan Chronicle Women of Excellence Awards celebrates local African-American women who inspire others through their vision and leadership, exceptional achievements, and participation in community service.
- Earlier this week, WEMU was awarded first place for Best News or Public Affairs special at the Broadcast Excellence Awards, presented virtually by the Michigan Association of Broadcasters. The winning program was the "Ask the Experts" call-in program that took place in the early stages of the pandemic in March 2020. Hosted and moderated by WEMU's Lisa Barry, Sherry Bumpus, director of nursing operations, and Beverly Mihalko, assistant professor of health administration, spent an hour answering questions about COVID-19 from listeners who posed questions by phone, email, or via Facebook Live.

Please join me in congratulating everyone involved in these fine examples of Eastern Excellence!

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;
- Observe physical distancing; and,
- Get vaccinated when you are eligible.

These four 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.