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COVID-19 Campus Update, April 1, 2021

Eastern Michigan University

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COVID-19 Campus Update – April 1, 2021

Thursday, April 1, 2021

To the Eastern Michigan University community:

I'm sure for many of you our spring recess, that begins tomorrow, is a welcome break in the rush to complete the work for this semester. I think all of us are looking for a return to spring-like weather too, and if the forecast holds true, Saturday and Sunday look to be just what we're looking for.

As I write this message today, we are confronted with two serious issues. One is the rising number of COVID-19 cases in our state and nation; and second, much closer to home and very serious to our students and community, is our continuing need to confront sexual assault and to support survivors who bravely come forward to tell of their past victimization by other students.

I want to reiterate my deep and unwavering support for all survivors of sexual assault, and our commitment to do everything we can to provide a safe environment for our students. As I've stated recently on several occasions, there is no place for sexual violence in our community.

The University is committed to learning every detail about the cases that are the subject of a recent lawsuit. We want to know whether our processes related to these cases were followed and, if not, why not and what steps should be taken so that our students are protected and feel supported in reporting sexual assault. We have stated from the beginning of this matter that we are committed to full transparency in this process. To that end, last fall, EMU engaged Cozen O'Connor, an independent law firm recognized nationally for its expertise in Title IX, to review and assess EMU's actions. The Cozen O'Connor report will be made public when it is finalized later this spring.

Protecting students is critical to the University's educational mission. Our staff in law enforcement, Title IX, student affairs, and elsewhere works tirelessly every day to try to create a safe and supportive community for students, faculty and staff.

The University has initiated several actions in recent years to create greater awareness and encourage the reporting of sexual assaults. Much of this has been accomplished as a result of grants we have been awarded by the State of Michigan in recognition of our ongoing efforts. Details can be found in this [Title IX grants update](#).

These allegations are very serious and concerning to all of us. We will continue to share information throughout this process, and are committed to addressing any deficiencies in our processes that are identified. We have prepared an extensive [questions and answers page](#) to provide additional information about the recent lawsuit and the University's actions.

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:

- COVID-19 Dashboard
- Free COVID-19 Testing
- Washtenaw County Vaccination Tracking
- Regent Dr. Jessie Kimbrough Marshall/Family Empowerment Program launch vaccine education effort
- Renaming of Judy Sturgis Hill Building and the Legacy - Sponberg Theatres is complete with new signage
- Swoop's Food Pantry Update
- Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence
- Health and Safety Reminder

COVID-19 Dashboard

In the seven days ending March 30, the University administered 1,305 COVID-19 tests that resulted in 15 positive cases, for a positivity rate of 1.15%. We confirmed a total of 33 positive cases during this period. Of those, three were students who live off-campus and had no contact with campus prior to the time they tested positive and 20 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. Among University employees, 10 cases were reported.

Since Aug. 12, the University has administered a total of 31,363 tests with 353 positive results for an overall positivity rate of 1.13% -- 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. Next week's schedule:

- Monday 12 - 4 p.m.
- Tuesday 9 a.m.- 2 p.m.
- Wednesday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- Thursday 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 Athletics. It includes [some great athletic wear](#), valued at \$120.

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. 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

The number of people receiving vaccines in our area continues to increase. As of March 30, Washtenaw County reported 80.2% of residents 65 or older had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. That's up from 78% last week. For residents 16 and over, 37.4% had received at least one dose – up from 32.4%. The data are being refreshed regularly. Visit the [WCHD vaccination tracking site](#) for ongoing updates.

Regent Dr. Jessie Kimbrough Marshall/Family Empowerment Program launch vaccine education effort

Eastern's [Family Empowerment Program](#), in collaboration with Regent and public health expert, Dr. Jessie Kimbrough Marshall, launched a vaccine education and outreach effort to educate the public about COVID-19 vaccines and access to getting a vaccine locally. The effort kicked off with nearly 30 volunteers going door-to-door at Ypsilanti Housing Commission communities last weekend to educate residents on the three approved vaccines, as well as provide information on local vaccine access. In addition, a webinar took place last night on Facebook Live. I was pleased to be asked to provide opening remarks -- you can [watch a recording of the informative session on the Engage@EMU Facebook page](#). Speakers included Dr. Kimbrough Marshall and Dr. Kiela Samuels, Clinical Pharmacist and Professor, Washtenaw County Community College and Michigan Medicine.

Renaming of Judy Sturgis Hill Building and the Legacy - Sponberg Theatres is complete with new signage

I am thrilled to share that the installation of new signage at the renamed Judy Sturgis Hill Building and the Legacy - Sponberg Theatres has been completed. You can view photos of the new signage and other details in this [EMU Today story](#).

Professor Sturgis Hill served in many roles on campus prior to passing away in January 2019. She was an EMU student, a member of the national championship Forensics team, a student activist on campus during the Civil Rights struggles, a resident hall advisor, a graduate assistant, a part-time lecturer, a recipient of a King-Chavez-Parks fellowship, a faculty member, a faculty in-residence (living in the First Year residence hall for a number of years to support students in their transition to college life), the Director of Diversity programs, the Interim Director of Office of Affirmative Action, the co-chair of the Martin L. King, Jr. planning committee from its inception, and co-Director of the Summer Institute for the Arts and Sciences. Dr. Sturgis Hill was also EMU's First National Forensics Champion, a recipient of the Alumni Teaching Excellence Award, a chosen faculty member to present in the Last Lecture Series, and a recipient of EMU's Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award.

To view her name on this building is testament to her legacy and her impact on the University and our students.

Swoop's Food Pantry Update

The hours for the John and Angie Sabo Swoop's Food Pantry Room are Mondays 10 a.m. - 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 seeking rice, microwave-ready meals, canned chicken, chicken noodle and chicken rice soup.

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:

- The School of Nursing has been awarded a grant of \$72,000 to develop a virtual reality program to address health inequities and social determinants of health impacting Asian Americans. This is to assist with the delivery of culturally-competent health care. The program is entitled "Immersive Community, Culture, and Care Experiences for Undergraduate Nursing Students: The 360-degree Difference." It will be developed and disseminated to all nursing schools in

Michigan. EMU was one of only two nursing schools in the state to receive the award. Dr. Tsu-Yin Wu, professor of nursing and director of EMU Center for Health Disparities Innovations and Studies, will serve as project director. You can [read more about the project on EMU Today](#).

- More than 180 students participated in 41st Undergraduate Research Symposium last Friday (March 26). Conducted virtually for the second consecutive year, the event provided an opportunity for students to share their research via Zoom or other formats. The presentations were stimulating; it is always a joy to see the work of our students on display. My thanks also to the more than 100 faculty members who supported our students in their research. For the next two weeks, you can view the presentations on the 41st Undergraduate Research Symposium virtual platform. Please [visit the EMU Today story](#) for additional details.

We were pleased to be joined by Eastern Michigan alumna Brenda Alten, who leads Human Resources Communications with the J.M. Smucker Company, who served as the keynote speaker for the Symposium. Alten, who graduated from EMU in 1988 with a bachelor's degree in Communication, noted a common denominator of the student presenters in her remarks. "You all have something you're passionate about and can share," she said. Alten recalled her time at Eastern, which included participating in the 1987 symposium. You can read more about her background and her remarks by visiting the [story on EMU Today](#).

- I have a correction to last week's highlight about WEMU's first place award for Best News or Public Affairs Special at the Michigan Broadcast Excellence Awards. The guests of the "Ask the Experts" call-in program that won first place were Beverly Mihalko, associate professor of health administration, and Washtenaw County Sheriff (and EMU alum) Jerry Clayton.

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 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.