

2020

COVID-19 Campus Update, April 24, 2020

Eastern Michigan University

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Friday, April 24, 2020

COVID-19 Campus Update – April 24, 2020

To the Eastern Michigan University community:

Today Governor Whitmer issued a new executive order extending the “Stay Home, Stay Safe” directive through May 15, 2020. The new order included some changes to the previous order, some of which are significant to our University and our students and employees.

Below are details of today’s executive order that specifically impact our campus community:

Students living on campus

The new order relaxes restrictions on travel between two homes or for the purposes of moving. This allows students living in residence halls who were unable to move out, to return to their primary residence beginning today.

It also allows students living in residence halls who had previously left but did not remove their belongings, the opportunity to return to campus to do so. Students are expected to move their items out of the rooms by one week from today, Friday, May 1.

Employees working on campus

Employees who have been working remotely will continue to do so, pursuant to the terms of the new executive order, through at least May 15, 2020.

Employees who have been designated as "critical infrastructure workers" or who have been specifically assigned to conduct “minimum basic operations” (as noted in the Governor’s executive order) should continue to work on campus as directed by their supervisors. Under the Governor’s new executive order, all employees working on campus are required to wear a non-medical grade facemask. The University must provide facemasks for any employee who needs one. Many employees working on campus, such as those in the Department of Public Safety, have already been wearing facemasks. Any employees working on campus with questions about facemasks should consult with their supervisors, who are working out the arrangements to ensure all on-campus workers have and are wearing facemasks.

Moving forward together

We know that students and employees are eager for more information about when campus offices will re-open, as well as details about how academic instruction and other University programs will operate in the fall. I share your eagerness for more certainty about our future. Our shared desire for more clarity in the face of so many unknown

factors is not unique to EMU; every institution of higher education in the United States is struggling with these same issues.

The global pandemic and resulting economic crisis are unprecedented in our nation's history. In this rapidly changing environment, fixed timelines are simply not possible. Instead, we must plan for various scenarios with different possible timelines. That planning process must be methodical; it cannot and will not be rushed. Therefore, we cannot answer all questions as quickly as one might wish. This approach requires patience. It is also, however, a best practice used by government health agencies, our peers, and public and private organizations around the world.

In the coming days and weeks, we will use the University's existing input structures to execute a collaborative process to develop these scenarios. As always, we will keep the entire campus community informed as this process and its resulting decisions come to fruition.

Celebrating our graduates!

Tomorrow, instead of lining up at the Convocation Center for Commencement ceremonies, our graduates will have the opportunity to take part in a digital media/virtual experience. As we all know, our in-person commencement plans were postponed due to public health directives related to the COVID-19 crisis. A traditional in-person ceremony for our current graduating students will take place at a date yet to be determined.

The virtual experience will create a memorable celebration for the graduating class while also providing an opportunity for faculty, staff, alumni, and fellow students to offer their congratulations. The platform includes celebratory content, including a wonderful video from the EMU community and social media filters that allow graduates to virtually wear a graduation cap and celebrate the occasion.

Graduating students will receive both a text and email tomorrow with links on how to participate. We all will have the opportunity to celebrate our graduates and watch the fun unfold on the University's social media channels starting tomorrow.

Graduates seeking regalia

We have heard from many of our April graduating students who wish to purchase graduation gowns and mortar boards for their "at home" celebrations and photos. We've arranged through the bookstore to make that happen. Please [visit this site to learn more](#).

Diplomas

Diplomas will begin being shipped on June 10, 2020 via UPS to the address students provided when applying for graduation. For address updates, please email registrar@emich.edu.

Yesterday's Board of Regents meeting

As you know, yesterday's Board of Regents meeting was held remotely and streamed live due to the COVID-19 crisis. I am pleased, thanks to the work of the Board of Regents Office, IT and Communications, that the video stream of the meeting went smoothly and we have received positive feedback on the process.

We were able to complete several important pieces of business, the primary of which was Board of Regents authorization to pursue the sale of the Gary Owen Building at a price of \$2.7 million. This transaction will allow us to return the College of Business to main campus, thereby enhancing interdisciplinary opportunities for faculty and students. Moreover, this arrangement will reduce the University's annual utility, custodial and other expenses by nearly \$1 million and eliminate \$13.2 million in deferred maintenance for the building and the adjacent parking garage. Full details can be found here: [Eastern Michigan University announces plan to move College of Business to central campus](#)

Collective bargaining agreements with the unions representing police officers and the command officers in the EMU Department of Public Safety also were approved. We thank our officers for their commitment and service in these challenging times. Details of the agreements can be found here: [Eastern Michigan University reaches contract agreements with unions representing EMU police officers and command officers](#)

In my [regular report to the Board of Regents](#), I thanked the entire Eastern Michigan University community for your supportive and collaborative efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You can read all of [the documents from yesterday's meeting](#) on the Board of Regents website.

Swoop's Food Pantry update

The John and Angie Sabo Swoop's Food Pantry Room will be open next week on Tuesday (4/28) and Thursday (4/30), from noon – 3:30 p.m. Clients 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](#).

If you wish to donate items – those most needed are cereal, rice, tofu, dish soap, hand soap, pasta sauce, and ready to eat items.

Items can be dropped off Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. – noon at 104 Pierce Hall. Swoop's can pick up items from your porch for those in the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti area. Send an email to swoops_pantry@emich.edu to arrange a donation pickup.

Please maintain social/physical distancing guidance when picking up or delivering items to the Pantry.

Financial contributions to support Swoop's should be directed to [Swoop's Food Pantry](#).

Good news to share

We have another good news story to share in our ongoing effort to highlight projects in which our campus members are supporting one another and the community. Today's highlight is the work of the Family Empowerment Program (FEP). On-site Eastern Michigan social workers are currently assisting families living in all Ypsilanti Housing Commission (YHC) communities – serving as a key point for social, health and economic access, education support and community navigation.

During the COVID crisis, FEP's social workers are deemed essential workers and continue to provide daily on-site support and critical resources to almost 1,000 YHC residents, including coordinating bi-weekly deliveries by Food Gatherers and American Muslim Neighbors. You can find photographs of the efforts on our [Everyday Eastern Heroes photo gallery](#).

Visit the [Engage@EMU Family Empowerment Program website](#) for additional information or contact emu_engage@emich.edu.

Please continue to let us know about positive initiatives among our students and faculty, and in the community. Send a message to emu_univcomm@emich.edu.

Follow your University email, the University's [COVID-19 website](#) and our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for additional information and updates, as well as resources to help keep you safe. Continue to observe physical distancing guidance, as well as hand washing and other [prevention](#) measures.

I hope you are able to enjoy the warmer weather we are expecting this weekend. I wish you and your families and friends safety and good health in the days and weeks ahead.

James Smith, Ph.D.