

2020

COVID-19 Campus Update, August 7, 2020

Eastern Michigan University

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Friday, August 7, 2020

COVID-19 Campus Update – August 7, 2020

To the Eastern Michigan University community:

We are moving ever closer to the start of a fall semester filled with a level of uncertainty that is unprecedented in our time. While I am very confident that the extensive precautions and planning that have been underway for the last several months are being executed with the highest level of professionalism, expertise and concern for the health and safety of our community, many variables remain that will impact our path forward.

Be assured that we will continue to closely monitor the situation around us in our community and here on our campus as we move forward. We will be vigilant in our pursuit of new information and data, as we have been. This will help us make informed decisions.

As you know, through this process we have relied a great deal on the University's own expertise and talent among faculty and staff. Nowhere is this more evident than the members of our Public Health Work Group, who were appointed in May with the critical charge of researching and [recommending our path forward](#) to the reopening of campus. I am pleased to announce that while the original working group completed its work and issued its recommendations, a second iteration of the group is being formed. The new committee will focus on the implementation of public health guidelines within work units, continually reviewing and researching government orders and developments related to COVID-19, and recommending corresponding actions as we proceed to the start of classes on August 31 and through the fall semester. It also will suggest metrics to be considered for the ongoing monitoring and review of campus conditions related to COVID-19. We hope to announce the members of the group within the week.

Today, we are issuing the [Eastern Michigan University Safe Return-to-Campus Plan](#). The Plan provides an outline for a safe phased return to campus in the fall. As we have expressed many times over the past months, the health and safety of our community is our highest priority. The well-being of our students, faculty and staff is our guiding principle in every action we take.

While the currently posted version of the Safe Return to Campus Plan is a PDF, a web-based version is in development and will be available next week.

The Plan includes a collective commitment to protecting our community, articulating our shared responsibility towards one another, as well as the guiding principles that inform our decisions and actions going forward.

Most importantly, it features the EMUSafe actions that are being implemented to provide a safe environment. As noted in the Plan, until a vaccine is developed, any

single measure, standing alone, is likely insufficient to slow the spread of COVID-19. The University will therefore take a layered approach using multiple strategies that, together, will make our campus community safer by reducing the spread of COVID-19. Following all health protocols in conjunction with each other (e.g., wearing a face covering, physical distancing, personal hygiene) dramatically reduces your risk of contracting COVID-19 and that of other campus members as well. These requirements are therefore designed to overlap and reinforce each other and must be observed in their entirety.

Below is an overview of the key safety actions included in the Safe Return to Campus Plan. As you review the Plan, each of these areas is discussed in much greater detail than outlined here. It is important to read the plan in its entirety to fully understand all of the measures taking place.

- Daily health screening for students and employees. All students and employees present on campus will be required to complete a daily screening process to identify potential symptoms of COVID-19. This strategy has been used effectively by hospitals, retail stores, and other organizations. This system requires everyone's participation to succeed. Compliance will be verified at check-in stations located at the entrance to buildings.
- Face coverings. Wearing a face covering is one of several important actions that reduce the spread of COVID-19. Everyone on campus (e.g., students, faculty, staff, and visitors) is required to wear a face covering that covers both the nose and mouth while inside all university buildings and on our grounds. Individuals need not wear a face covering in a private office with the door closed, in private living space with a door closed, or in some other isolated spaces such as when alone inside a vehicle.
- Physical distancing. Physical distancing is one of the most effective strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Whenever practical, all individuals on University grounds must maintain physical distance of six feet or more from other individuals who are not part of their household. Although on-campus housing roommates are part of the same household, these standards will apply in campus housing common areas.
- Reduced density of individuals on campus. Campus offices and student services will continue to operate in a mix of formats including in-person, by appointment only, and online. This will help to significantly reduce overall traffic within buildings. Office hours and in-person meetings will continue to be reduced and limited as well. Traffic patterns within buildings will be prescribed in order to support the maintenance of physical distancing requirements mentioned earlier. In most buildings, swipe card/appointment only access will be maintained except at the appointed entrance for student access.
- Cleaning and disinfecting. All public areas in campus buildings (e.g., restrooms, hallways, classrooms, offices) are subject to frequent and in-depth cleaning. For example, disinfectant electrostatic fogging is used in large areas and spaces that are difficult to clean using traditional methods (such as locker rooms), and touch points (e.g., light switches, elevator buttons, desks, and door handles) are cleaned on a daily basis. The standards for each building vary based on the building size, layout, use, and other relevant criteria, and cleaning standards may evolve depending on the time of year, day

of the week, government regulations, and other criteria.

- Class instruction. Course sections will be delivered in-person, online, or in a hybrid format. Decisions about how individual course sections will be delivered have been made at the college and department level to ensure that each course's pedagogical needs are addressed and that students receive access to the excellent education they expect. The Office of the Provost staff and the Registrar have worked with Deans to execute this process. Classroom space will be extremely limited in the fall because of physical distancing standards. Room scheduling is therefore being managed centrally by the Office of the Provost, and a substantial majority of class sections will be offered in an online or hybrid format.

Fall course delivery methods are currently being updated. This process will continue through the weekend and is expected to be completed mid-week next week. While any completed changes are viewable in Banner and my.emich in real time, we will notify students when all changes are complete and they may view their revised course schedule.

The Safe Return to Campus Plan also includes information about plans for dining, housing, athletics, travel, and visitors and guests, among other important information. As I stated, it is critical to review the Plan in its entirety to understand the full scope of safety actions that are being put in place.

The details surrounding EMU's phased safe return to campus will continue to evolve. I therefore urge you to continue to carefully read email updates and check the Safe Return to Campus Plan online for the latest information. The safety actions will be updated as we learn more about the most effective ways to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, as government regulations evolve, and as new decisions are made.

Remote work plans for employees

We appreciate employees' patience as the global pandemic continues to evolve. A few offices have resumed on-campus operations consistent with government orders and guidelines to ensure a safe environment for employees, students, and a small number of authorized visitors. Understandably, we are hearing from increasing numbers of other employees who are eager to begin preparing their offices to re-open on-campus operations for the fall semester. In some cases, this planning work is already underway. In other cases, division leaders will, in the coming days, begin working with their offices to develop and execute plans for the safe phased return to on-campus operations. We will provide more information on return to on-campus work plans in the coming days.

Swoop's Food Pantry update

Next week, the John and Angie Sabo Swoop's Food Pantry Room will be open on Tuesday (8/11) from 12:30 – 5:30 p.m. and Thursday (8/13) from 12 – 3 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 – they can be dropped off Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. – noon at 104 Pierce Hall. Swoop's can also 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 physical distancing guidance when picking up or delivering items to the Pantry.

Highlighting success in research and academics

I take great pride in “bragging” about the wonderful work of our students, faculty and staff. I have two such examples to share today.

Dr. Kasim Korkmaz, a professor in the School of Visual and Built Environments, has joined a research team formed by the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) to work on a two-year project to improve the resilience of historic, sacred buildings along the Texas Gulf Coast Region.

The project, entitled, “[Resilience Analysis of Historically Designated Sacred Places in the Texas Gulf Coast Region](#),” is aimed at ensuring that the structures can better survive and in turn help others during severe weather events such as the recent Hurricane Hanna, which hit the southern Texas Gulf Coast this past week.

Professor Korkmaz, an expert in structural engineering, will evaluate the buildings in terms of their current status and structural capacities.

The Eastern Michigan University chapter of Beta Alpha Psi, a national accounting honors organization with a strong emphasis on community service, has been recognized internationally as a [superior chapter for the 21st consecutive year](#).

In a letter announcing the honor, Beta Alpha Psi Chapter Services Manager Lisa Wicker praised the club's efforts during a difficult year. “You and your students should be proud of this achievement during this especially challenging year,” Wicker said. “We thank you for all your efforts and look forward to another great year for your chapter.”

Howard Bunsis, a professor of accounting at Eastern, is in his 21st year as faculty adviser, and the chapter has been honored as “superior” each of those years.

The EMU chapter performs hundreds of hours of community service each semester, including work on behalf of other organizations such as Meals on Wheels, the Walk to Fight Cancer, Habitat for Humanity and Food Gatherers.

In addition, this winter members of Beta Alpha Psi again filled out the tax returns for low-income individuals in the Ypsilanti community, an annual activity for the club.

Congratulations Dr. Korkmaz and the members of Beta Alpha Psi for your fine work and the recognition it brings to Eastern Michigan University!

As I do each week, I will conclude with an important health and safety reminder as we head into the weekend. Please continue to:

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

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

Please continue to follow the [University's COVID-19 website](#) and the [EMU Safe website](#) for ongoing updates.

Have a safe weekend.

James Smith, Ph.D.