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COVID-19 Campus Update, April 29, 2021

Eastern Michigan University

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COVID-19 Campus Update – April 29, 2021

Thursday, April 29, 2021

To the Eastern Michigan University community:

Today the State of Michigan launched a new campaign to encourage more people to get COVID-19 vaccinations as part of the overall plan to further reduce the number of COVID-19 cases in our community. The [“MI Vacc to Normal”](#) campaign establishes a series of vaccination milestones, corresponding actions and steps to “normalcy” once those milestones are achieved.

I strongly encourage every member of the campus community to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccine availability is now open to everyone over the age of 16.

Simply put, and the experts agree, getting vaccinated is the way out of the pandemic. If for some reason you are putting it off, please reconsider. The number of daily new cases in Michigan continues to be in the thousands and approximately 100 residents die from it every day. Get vaccinated. It is the surest way to protect yourself, and others, from the seriousness of a COVID-19 exposure.

It is quick and easy to schedule a vaccination. If you live and work in Washtenaw County, you can learn more about the vaccination and, in turn, [register on the Washtenaw County Health Department site](#). You also can seek a vaccination through your primary health care provider, or many pharmacies in the area, including:

[Kroger](#)

[Meijer](#)

[Rite Aid](#)

[Walgreens](#)

The [Vaccine Finder website](#) can help you find a location anywhere in the state or nation.

The number of individuals receiving vaccines in our area continues to increase. As of April 27, Washtenaw County reported 83.4% of residents 65 or older had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 77.3% had completed their vaccine protocol. For residents 16 and over, 57.7% had received at least one dose – up from 53.5% the week before. A total of 40.8% of individuals 16 and over have completed their vaccine protocol. Visit the WCHD vaccination tracking site for ongoing updates.

In Michigan, as of April 27, 48.8% of residents have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with 35.9% having completing the vaccine protocol. Details, as well as a county-by-county breakout, can be found on the Michigan vaccine dashboard.

I have several additional updates to share this week:

- Summer Plans for Face Coverings, Other #EMUSafe Practices

- COVID-19 Dashboard
- Summer Schedule for Free On-Campus COVID-19 Testing
- Search Committee: Chief of Police and Executive Director of Public Safety
- Rec/IM Summer Hours
- Swoop's Food Pantry Update
- Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence
- Health and Safety Reminder

Summer Plans for Face Coverings, Other #EMUSafe Practices

The Centers for Disease Control announcement yesterday relaxing some face-covering standards for fully vaccinated individuals when outdoors has led to questions about the University's plans going forward. I want to make it clear that we will continue our mandatory face covering guidelines at least through the Summer A semester. As you know, we have been very successful in keeping our case numbers relatively low, thanks to the strong support of our campus community for our #EMUSafe initiatives. I do not see any reason to change what is currently working well. As in the past, I want to thank all students, faculty and staff for doing their part in complying with safe practices. It has truly made a difference on our campus. We will begin a thorough review of fall semester protocols at the end of May.

COVID-19 Dashboard

In the seven days ending April 27, the University administered 594 COVID-19 tests that resulted in 13 positive cases, for a positivity rate of 2.19%. We confirmed a total of 25 positive cases during this period. Of those, 12 were students who live off-campus and had no contact with campus prior to the time they tested positive and 13 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. There were no cases reported among University employees.

Since Aug. 12, the University has administered a total of 35,276 tests with 400 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

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Summer Schedule for Free On-Campus Covid-19 Testing

The University's COVID-19 Testing Center will continue to offer free COVID-19 tests to members of the campus community throughout the summer. Testing is an important factor in the University's successful efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 among our campus community -- we encourage you to be tested regularly!

Any member of the Eastern community may receive a free COVID-19 test at the Testing Center. We encourage students, faculty and staff to take advantage of this opportunity on a regular basis, not just when required.

During Summer A and Summer B semesters, residents living on campus will be required to continue testing twice per month through the Testing Center. A specific message will be sent to summer on-campus housing residents outlining more details.

We encourage continued routine COVID-19 testing even if you are fully vaccinated. While being vaccinated limits the symptoms of COVID-19 should you contract it, vaccinated individuals may still be carriers of COVID-19 and inadvertently spread it to friends and family. The COVID-19 vaccine will not cause a positive test result because the vaccine does not contain the live virus.

Any member of the campus community may sign up for free COVID-19 testing through emich.edu/covid-testing. You must register for a test before you arrive for an appointment.

The on-campus Testing Center is located in the lower level of the Student Center (next to the Bookstore). Visit the [testing website](#) to review the Center's schedule because hours are subject to change.

The Testing Center is currently closed through Tuesday, May 4 due to water maintenance at the Student Center. The Testing Center will be open in subsequent weeks as follows:

- Wednesday, May 5: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Thursday, May 6: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Tuesday, May 11: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 12: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Tuesday, May 18: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 19: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Rec/IM Summer Hours

The Rec/IM's summer hours will begin on Monday, May 3. These hours will also be posted on the [Rec/IM website](#).

- Monday-Friday: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- Saturdays: Noon to 4 p.m.

- Sundays: Noon to 4 p.m.

The Rec/IM will be closed on May 31 for Memorial Day; July 4 and 5 for Independence Day; and August 9 to 14 for staff training and building maintenance.

Search Committee: Chief of Police and Executive Director of Public Safety

Police Chief and Executive Director of Public Safety Bob Heighes will retire this September after 38 years with Eastern. Chief Heighes began at Eastern in 1984 as a patrol officer. In August 2020, he announced his plans to retire as part of University's voluntary early retirement incentive program. He has a total of 44 years in law enforcement, serving as deputy in the Baraga County Sheriff's Department in Michigan's Upper Peninsula prior to joining Eastern.

Chief Heighes was named to his current position following a nationwide search in April 2012. He has had an exemplary career at the University and has led the Department of Public Safety through many positive initiatives that have brought a community approach to policing on our campus.

At this time, however, it is important that we begin the search for his successor. The first step in that process is to identify and announce the members of the search committee who will be guiding this process. These members are:

- Mike Valdes, Chief Financial Officer, Chair
- Dr. Marilyn Corsianos, Professor, Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology Dept. and Faculty Senate Representative
- Dr. LaMarcus Howard, Director, Disability Resource Center
- Walter Kraft, Vice President for Communications
- Lauren London, General Counsel
- Luis Romero, Student Body President
- Ofc. Tim Siecinski, Public Safety
- Sgt. David Shefferly, Public Safety
- Jeanette Zalba, Director, Housing & Residence Life
- Casey Wooster, Office of the President (support)

I would like to thank each of the committee members for volunteering to participate in this important endeavor.

Swoop's Food Pantry Update

The John and Angie Sabo Swoop's Food Pantry Room will reopen on Monday, May 3. The summer hours 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 most needed items are notebooks, cereal, rice, dry dog food and mayonnaise.

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

Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence

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

- Eastern Michigan University faculty members will be pursuing a rich array of research, scholarly and creative projects/activities this summer under the Summer Research/Creative Activity Awards. The annual awards are intended to encourage and support the endeavors of full-time, tenured or tenure-track EMU faculty during the summer months, by providing stipends of \$12,000 for outstanding proposals in lieu of summer teaching assignments. Learn more about the projects and the faculty members involved by visiting this [story on EMU Today](#).
- A variety of fascinating projects will be explored by 11 undergraduate students as part of the annual Symposium Undergraduate Research Fellowship program. The program encourages partnerships between undergraduate students and faculty to facilitate student participation in the annual Undergraduate Symposium. Students are provided with a \$1,000 stipend and faculty members are provided up to \$1,000 to support the project. Please visit the [EMU Today story](#) to learn more about the projects and the 11 students who received the award.
- Graduate student L'Meese Greaney finished in the top eight in the Midwestern Association of Graduate Schools competition for her three-minute oral summation of her master's thesis: "On the Syntactic and Pragmatic Interpretation of the Imperative Discourse Marker 'Look, here's the deal.'" L'Meese, a master's student in English Linguistics, conducted her research on when, where, how, and by whom the term "look" was used in presidential and vice-presidential debates from 2008-2020. This work included analysis from both syntactic and practical perspectives. A [full story about her research project](#) can be found on the EMU Today News Hub.

Congratulations to these individuals 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;
- 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.