

2021

## **COVID-19 Campus Update – May 13, 2021**

Eastern Michigan University

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Thursday, May 13, 2021

To the Eastern Michigan University community:

As we move into the summer our planning continues for a more traditional fall semester this year with in-person classes and on-campus experiences beginning their re-entry into campus life. We have much to look forward to in the coming months. The efforts of our campus community are focused on fostering the dynamic learning environment and student-centered approach of this great institution – the second oldest public university in Michigan. The coming weeks provide an ideal time to reflect on our enduring mission, values and objectives and how they help us navigate a post-COVID landscape.

These objectives guide our path:

- To provide high quality academic programs taught by faculty deeply committed to student success – on a campus where the student body reflects today’s diverse, global work world;
- To invest in facilities, classrooms, labs and learning spaces to provide students and faculty with the latest technology and resources to be successful;
- To understand the varying lives, experiences and needs of our students from a holistic perspective. And, through that lens, provide support for their success and well being both in and beyond the classroom – covering everything from advising, to financial aid, to wellness; and,
- To build and support community by expanding our strong external partnerships and facilitating learning beyond the classroom through high impact practices such as internships, work study, and study abroad opportunities.

You don’t need to look further than the renovated Sill Hall, or Strong Hall, the Rec/IM, or our outstanding Student Center, to get a first-hand understanding of the depth of the University’s commitment to academic excellence, student success, wellness and the overall student experience. Just yesterday, we announced a [\\$2.2 million grant from the Windgate Foundation](#) that, along with matching funds from the University and the Eastern Michigan University Foundation, will be used to construct a dynamic new 3D Arts Complex on campus.

Whether pursuing the arts, business, education, engineering, health, sciences or technology, our commitment to preparing students for success is stronger than ever. We will continue to align our resources to areas of high demand and career opportunities.

As the University transitions to a post-COVID “new normal,” we want to update you about important initiatives that will help guide EMU’s future.

Strategic Plan: Following two years of excellent work by faculty, staff, students, and alumni, the University is nearing completion of its updated Strategic Plan. The updated Plan will lay out specific goals and actions to build on EMU's mission as an institution of opportunity that provides high-quality personalized learning to a diverse student body. We will soon launch a website that includes the proposed updates to the Plan, an opportunity for employees to provide feedback, and other information.

Budget updates: The Board of Regents agenda in June will include consideration and approval of the University's budget for the upcoming fiscal year (which begins on July 1). The agenda also includes setting tuition and fee rates. The next few weeks should also see action by the legislature and Governor to provide annual funding to Michigan's public universities.

As this process unfolds, it is important for all of us to fully understand -- and respond to -- the changing nature of higher education in the United States and particularly in our region. In the coming weeks, we will announce several updates and initiatives designed to ensure that our budget planning reflects the changing landscape in which we now operate. COVID relief funds have eased the short term impact of the past year but we will need to revisit the challenges of long term demographic change, address hard questions about the place of traditional models of higher education in today's world, and further consider how best to effectively support and serve a diverse student body with unique needs, perspectives and concerns.

Student relief funds: This week the federal government released the next phase of COVID-relief funding, which includes additional direct aid for students. The University is preparing a plan to distribute these funds. Students should watch their email and regularly check [this website](#) for future updates. We all should work together, now more than ever, to encourage students to complete the FAFSA form as this is a significant piece of information needed to qualify them to receive these funds. Even students who have not received grant-based aid in the past may be eligible for relief funds and should be encouraged to complete the FAFSA form.

Please continue to monitor your email for updates about these important matters.

I have several other updates to share this week:

- Vaccination Update
- COVID-19 Dashboard
- Free On-Campus COVID-19 Testing Schedule
- 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Alumni Awards this Saturday, May 15
- Broadband Benefit Program
- Swoop's Food Pantry Update
- Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence
- Health and Safety Reminder

## Vaccination Update

Please get vaccinated, if you are able. It is one of the most important steps you can take to protect yourself and others from critical illness, and stop the spread of COVID-19. While scheduling an appointment is preferred, many locations now offer a limited number of walk-up vaccinations. If you are planning to walk-up, check with the clinic first.

Below are links to vaccine providers to help you find one convenient for you:

- For those who live or work in Washtenaw County, visit the [Washtenaw County Health Department site](#). Clinics are operating at EMU's Convocation Center and at Pierce Elementary School in Chelsea, as well as at pop-up locations you can find on the website.
- [Kroger](#)
- [Meijer](#)
- [Rite Aid](#)
- [Walgreens](#)
- [VaccineFinder](#) – provides an easy search function for clinic locations in the state or nation so users can find one that's most convenient.

The number of individuals receiving vaccines in our area continues to increase. As of May 10, Washtenaw County reported 86.5% of residents 65 or older had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 82% had completed their vaccine protocol. For residents 16 and over, 62.8% had received at least one dose – up from 60.6% the week before. A total of 52.5% of County residents 16 and over have completed their vaccine protocol. Visit the [WCHD vaccination tracking site](#) for ongoing updates.

In Michigan, as of May 11, 52.3% of residents have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with 43.1% having completing the vaccine protocol. Details, as well as a county-by-county breakout, can be found on the [Michigan vaccine dashboard](#).

## COVID-19 Dashboard

In the seven days ending May 12, the University administered 243 COVID-19 tests that resulted in 11 positive cases, for a positivity rate of 4.53%. We confirmed a total of 13 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 nine 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. A single case was reported among University employees.

Since Aug. 12, the University has administered a total of 35,929 tests with 415 positive results for an overall positivity rate of 1.16% -- considerably lower than state and national tracking. Complete details can be found on the University's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

### Free On-Campus Covid-19 Testing Schedule

The University's COVID-19 Testing Center will continue to offer free COVID-19 tests to members of the campus community throughout the summer. We encourage you to be tested regularly!

Any member of the Eastern community may receive a free COVID-19 test at the Testing Center. You must register in advance at [emich.edu/covid-testing](https://emich.edu/covid-testing). 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.

COVID-19 testing is encouraged 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 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.

The Testing Center is located in the lower level of the Student Center (next to the Bookstore). It is open the following dates and times:

- Tuesday, May 18: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 19: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Tuesday, May 25: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 26: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Visit the [testing website](#) to review the Center's schedule because hours are subject to change.

### 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Alumni Awards this Saturday, May 15

The University's 60th Annual Alumni Awards will premiere at 6 p.m. this Saturday, May 15. The Office for Alumni Relations, guided by the Alumni Association Board of Directors and the Recognition, Awards and Scholarship Committee, will highlight 11 award recipients from both 2020 and 2021. The master of ceremonies is FOX2 news anchor, reporter and alumnus, Josh Landon. Watch the virtual event and learn more about the honorees on the [Alumni Relations website](#).

## Emergency Broadband Benefit Program

A new federal program went into effect yesterday that provides emergency funding to support internet access. Eligible households will be able to enroll in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program to receive a monthly discount off the cost of broadband service from an approved provider. Those who are eligible can enroll through an approved provider or by visiting <https://getemergencybroadband.org>.

The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program will provide eligible households with discounts of up to \$50 a month for broadband service, and up to \$75 a month if the household is on Tribal lands. It also will provide a one-time discount of up to \$100 on a computer or tablet for eligible households.

Under the law, the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program is open to households that participate in an existing low-income or pandemic relief program offered by a broadband provider; Lifeline subscribers, including those that are on Medicaid or accept SNAP benefits; households with children receiving free and reduced-price lunch or school breakfast; Pell grant recipients; and those who have lost jobs and seen their income reduced in the last year.

## Swoop's Food Pantry Update

Summer 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 most needed items are rice, soy milk, almond milk, and cat and dog food.

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

## Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence

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

- Engage@EMU office is collaborating with the University of Michigan Ginsberg Center to [launch Digital Connecting Corps](#) (DCC) to help bridge the intergenerational digital divide in Washtenaw County by helping older adults learn technology skills.

The program will train students at both universities to be "tech coaches," who will then work with older adults in Washtenaw County to help them learn how to use their smartphones, laptops and desktop computers. The training program is free to participants and laptop computers are available for those who need one.

Julie Vogl, project coordinator of Engage@EMU, told EMU Today, "The COVID-19 pandemic has increased social isolation and the lack of digital access and digital literacy among older adults in Washtenaw County. Before the Digital Connecting Corps, there was no County-wide infrastructure or nonprofit focused on digital connection and literacy for older adults—the DCC begins to fill that void."

- Julie Becker, associate professor and interim director of the School of Technology and Professional Services Management, was featured in an [article in MLive](#) this week for her work to support a volunteer effort to make quilts for babies in neo-natal intensive care units in the area.

Dr. Becker's support of the quilt-making process came about after she learned that hand cutting the individual squares that are sewn together to make the quilts was too difficult for many of the volunteers. She offered to use the University's automatic cutting machine. The high-speed cutting process made a big difference in the production of the quilts and she has been able to train students to use the machine, which entails learning computer-aided design (CAD) systems.

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.