

2021

COVID-19 Campus Update – June 24, 2021

Eastern Michigan University

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Thursday, June 24, 2021

To the Eastern Michigan University community:

I begin this week's message with an important discussion of an extremely shocking finding. Reports today indicate a second burial site has been uncovered in Canada with more than 700 unmarked graves outside of a former residential school for Indigenous children in Saskatchewan. This follows last week's discovery of the remains of 215 children at a former residential school in British Columbia. Both schools were operated by the Roman Catholic Church.

As a result of these ongoing investigations in Canada, the United States has announced an investigation into what is described as the "unspoken horrors" at Native American boarding schools in our country.

While the investigation into these burials and unmarked graves is just beginning, they represent a deeply painful reminder of the horrific treatment of Indigenous populations and the shameful chapter this represents in American history. Please join me in taking time to reflect on this painful reality for our Native American community members, and to offer support where possible, as these investigations proceed.

We have several other updates to cover this week:

- Recovering From the Pandemic
- Vaccinations Update
- COVID-19 Testing Center Schedule
- Swoop's Food Pantry Schedule and Focus Groups
- Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence

Recovering From the Pandemic

It is wonderful to see people on our campus, and in communities and businesses across the state and nation, begin to return to a pre-pandemic lifestyle. It is truly remarkable that we are approaching the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel that, for so many months, seemed quite distant. I am not suggesting that we don't need to be careful -- there remain many challenges in front of us. The Delta COVID-19 variant is one of those -- but it is clear that we have entered a new phase of recovery, and frankly, it is truly extraordinary to witness.

The return to a more "normal" fall semester seems almost too good to be true. But true it is. We will see the return of in-person classes; campus activities; dining opportunities; homecoming events; and, fall sports -- to name just a few examples of the full TRUEMU

campus experience. We, however, will not *sprint* into this return. We will walk forward, slowly, and with great caution. We will pay close attention to safety protocols and guidelines in order to do our very best to keep everyone safe, as we have throughout the pandemic.

Undoubtedly, you are aware of the lifting of restrictions in Michigan on the wearing of face masks, outdoors and indoors, for those who are fully vaccinated. In light of that, the University is currently preparing changes to our face mask policies. The University's Safe Return Steering Committee is reviewing these changes and we expect to have details to share in the near future. Until then, our current policies remain in place:

Indoors: Everyone on campus is required to wear a face mask that covers both the nose and mouth indoors on campus or other University properties. Individuals need not wear a face mask (1) when they are alone in a private office with the door closed, living space, private motor vehicle, or other isolated space, (2) while eating, drinking, or swimming, or (3) where removal is necessary for physical examination of the mouth, nose, or throat.

Outdoors: Individuals in gatherings of less than 100 people are not required to wear face masks in outdoor settings on campus or other University properties. It may be necessary in a few specific functional areas to continue to wear a face covering while outside due to public health and safety risks. In those situations, you will be informed of the need to wear a face covering.

Safety will continue to be a priority in our actions moving forward. This is consistent with the many [#EMUSafe initiatives](#) implemented since the start of the pandemic that have kept the University's COVID-19 exposure levels for students, faculty and staff among the lowest in Michigan.

Vaccinations Update

The Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD) vaccination clinic at the EMU Convocation Center will be open this Saturday, June 26, from 9:15 – 11 a.m., and next Wednesday, June 30, from 9:15 – 11 a.m. Next Wednesday will be the final day of the Convocation Center vaccination clinic operation as the county continues to offer vaccinations at various community sites and pop-up clinics. You can find these locations on the [WCHD vaccinations website](#).

The University is working with the WCHD to host vaccination clinics on campus later this summer. We will have further details about these plans in the weeks ahead, as they are finalized.

Please get vaccinated, if your health permits. The importance of this has never been more evident. A [new report](#) concludes that nearly all of the COVID-19 deaths in the United States are now among people who are not vaccinated.

COVID-19 Testing Center Schedule

COVID-19 testing is encouraged even if you are fully vaccinated. While being vaccinated limits the symptoms of COVID-19, vaccinated individuals may still be carriers and inadvertently spread it to family and friends.

The Testing Center is located in the lower level of the Student Center (next to the Bookstore). It is open next week as follows:

Tuesday June 29: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Wednesday June 30: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Center will be closed the week of July 5 and will reopen Tuesday, July 13 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and will be open on Wednesday, July 14 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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

Swoop's Food Pantry Schedule and Focus Groups

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. Swoop's will be closed Monday, July 5 for the holiday.

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](#).

In terms of donations, the most needed items this week are notebooks, toilet paper, barbecue sauce and dog food. Monetary contributions are always appreciated and can be made [online](#).

If you've not used Swoop's Food Pantry yet, you might be interested in participating in a Swoop's focus group. Swoop's personnel will share information about the pantry and explore the barriers to using it. Swoop's has room for *just 10 students* to register. Participants will receive a small gift basket as a thank you.

Focus Group 1: July 6 at 10:30 a.m.

Zoom link: <https://emich.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZltd-usqD4pE9ZAnUwzmAefAuq5MAEGCji6>

Focus Group 2: July 7 at 10:30 a.m.

Zoom link: <https://emich.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYkf-6urTwsH9aUyQard9WLt9KZrsG7Ib10>

Please register with your EMU email.

Celebrating Eastern Michigan University Excellence

[EMU Esports](#) was featured on [WXYZ-TV/Channel 7](#) earlier this week. Program Assistant Director Charles Spencer was interviewed about the University's Esports summer camps and our partnership with international gaming leader Gen.G. The camps are designed to engage participants in dynamic gaming activities and competition, while providing information about the expanding esports industry and potential future careers. Visit the University's [summer camps website](#) to learn more.

The Esports program, along with recent developments in the GameAbove College of Engineering and Technology, are featured in the [latest episode of EMU Today TV](#). Produced by the School of Communication, Media and Theatre Arts, in collaboration with the Division of Communications, the new episode of EMU Today TV features extended interviews with Dean Mohamad Qatu and EMU Esports' Charles Spencer. The program can be found on the University's YouTube channel as well as on Xfinity OnDemand. Please click on the [link to the news release](#) for additional details about EMU Today TV.

Thank you to everyone involved in these University success stories!

Have a safe, restful and peaceful weekend.

James Smith, Ph.D.