

2021

COVID-19 Campus Update, September 23, 2021

Eastern Michigan University

Thursday, September 23, 2021

Campus Update – September 23, 2021

To the Eastern Michigan University community,

I hope everyone is finding a way to stay dry in what has been a soggy mid-September, to say the least!

As we have throughout the pandemic, we will devote a large part of this week's campus update to COVID-19. This update will include:

- our efforts to support and encourage vaccinations;
- the increase in mandatory and voluntary testing that's taking place;
- our testing practices and low positivity rates; and,
- an update on OSHA's upcoming order requiring vaccination or weekly testing for employees of employers with a workforce of over 100 people, which, of course, includes Eastern Michigan.

Following the updates on these health and safety items, I am pleased to share several positive items about other initiatives underway on our campus.

Vax to Win program

Yesterday, we announced the [second round winners](#) in our Vax to Win program. Round two prizes valued at more than \$20,000 are being distributed to 24 student winners and six employees. Similar to the first round giveaway, prizes in the second round included a \$5,000 credit to a student account for one winner; a \$1,000 credit to a student account for each of four separate winners; free on-campus housing for one semester for two students; a new computer for one student; and other prizes. Second round prizes for employees included a \$500 payment for four winners; a \$100 gift card to the EMU Bookstore for four winners; and, four winners of a \$100 credit to EMU Dining.

To be eligible for three more future drawings, students and employees must be vaccinated against COVID-19 and report their vaccine status via the [University's COVID Vax Certification system](#).

As a reminder, to be eligible for these drawings, students must be vaccinated and verify their vaccination status by next Friday, Oct. 8.

Students who choose not to be vaccinated and do not report their vaccination status to the University must undergo weekly COVID-19 testing beginning Sept. 30. Students subject to regular testing will be notified of their testing requirement through their EMU e-mail. Testing is available at [EMU's on-campus testing center](#). Students who get tested off-campus may [upload their test results](#) to the University.

Some student populations may be required to undergo more frequent testing if they participate in an activity with a higher risk of transmitting COVID-19. Those students will be notified of their additional testing requirements by their emich.edu email.

Vaccination pop-up clinics

If you have not yet been vaccinated and you are eligible to do so, now is a great time and we're making it easy! The next campus pop-up clinic is tomorrow (Friday), Sept. 24, from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. in the Student Center. Vaccinations are free and no appointment is needed. If you are off campus, you can text your zip code to GETVAX (438829) to find a vaccination clinic near you.

COVID-19 dashboard

I am pleased to report that we continue to experience a much lower positive case count than many of our peer institutions, a trend that is consistent with the University's history since the beginning of the pandemic.

In the seven days ending Sept. 21, the University administered 873 COVID-19 tests that resulted in 4 positive cases, for a positivity rate of 0.46 percent. During this time, we confirmed a total of 12 positive cases.

Since Aug. 12, 2020, the University has administered a total of 41,457 tests that resulted in 446 positive results for an overall positivity rate of 1.08 percent. Our positive rate is considerably lower than state and national tracking. Complete details can be found on the University's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

On-campus testing center

The University's on-campus testing center in the Student Center remains open during weekdays and has added a new weekend schedule beginning this Saturday, Sept. 25, when it will be open from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Tests are free. The new weekend testing schedule includes Saturday, Oct. 2 and Saturday, Oct. 16. Please visit the [testing center website](#) to learn more about our testing process and to see the hours of operation.

Federal Executive Order requiring vaccinations for employers with more than 100 employees

On Sept. 9, President Biden issued an executive order and directing the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard requiring vaccinations or weekly testing for people who work for employers with 100 or more employees. While we, and organizations around the country, are awaiting OSHA's formal directive, the University has initiated planning to prepare for implementation of such a program. Further details will be communicated once OSHA announces the details and requirements of the program.

Teamwork and collaboration behind our success

As stated earlier, our overall approach has led to much lower positivity rates than many of our peers. This is due to the highly collaborative work across campus involving many groups and individuals. I particularly want to highlight our Telehealth, housing, vaccination, and testing teams for a great deal of heavy lifting and teamwork to address matters as they occur. The contact tracing process is sophisticated and time intensive. It is key to the University's ability to notify those who might have been exposed to a positive case, and to recommend appropriate action.

It is important to remember that students, faculty and staff will be notified directly by the Telehealth team if it is believed they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.

I can't thank students enough for their support of our initiatives and their compliance with the wearing of [face masks](#), completing the [mandatory COVID Pass Daily Health Screening](#), and maintaining [physical distancing](#). Your critical role and actions to keep our community safe is such an important element of our success, and I thank you with the most sincere appreciation.

Celebrating Eastern Michigan University excellence

- The College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) is presenting its first themed year, a series of events showing how the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences can all add to our understanding of a single idea, thing, or place. There is no better place to start this interdisciplinary programming than the metropolis only 30 miles from campus: Detroit. The College and its departments, schools, and programs will host more than 30 events throughout the 2021-22 academic year that explore the dynamism of Detroit in the past and present.

Some of this rich programming includes: an EMU archives exhibit on the Detroit Club; a faculty and guest artist dance concert featuring Detroit choreographers; a panel of students from Detroit telling what they wish EMU faculty and staff knew about Detroit; a bus tour exploring African-American and immigration history in Detroit; a Civil Rights film series; a guided tour of the DIA; performances of the music of Motown by the EMU Marching Band; an EMU Theatre production of a play by Detroit playwright Dominique Morisseau; and, several specialized talks by EMU faculty members and visiting scholars.

Headlining CAS's Detroit Theme Year will be Kevin Boyle, the William Smith Mason Professor of American History at Northwestern University, and the 2021-22 McAndless Professor. A Detroit native and award-winning historian, Boyle will deliver a series of evening public lectures and will lead workshops with EMU students throughout the year.

This Detroit Theme Year will foster a campus and community-wide conversation about how the EMU community can more fully participate in the future of Detroit. These discussions about Detroit raise timely subjects of racial justice, economic equality, civic engagement, and environmental sustainability. I invite you to see the schedule of events on the [CAS Detroit Theme Year website](#) and to make plans to attend some of the events.

- The Higher Learning Commission is conducting a site visit and comprehensive institutional review on October 25-26 of this year. As part of this comprehensive review, EMU has submitted an Assurance Argument addressing the HLC's five criteria for accreditation of institutions of higher learning. Our 2021 document is posted on EMU's [HLC Accreditation page](#) of the EMU website.

We encourage all members of the University community to review the Assurance Argument to understand how the institution has responded to these criteria. HLC accreditation is vital to the success of the University. Our accreditation is valid through 2027. This review and visit is a mid-cycle check in on our progress toward meeting institutional goals. The results of the HLC's Student Opinion Survey (conducted during the spring of this year) are also posted and we encourage you to look at those as well. Additional information on how you may participate in the site visit will be available in the next few weeks.

- The Eastern Michigan University Foundation has produced a new [video to celebrate the initial success of Give Rise: The Campaign for Eastern Michigan University](#). The public phase of the \$100 million comprehensive campaign was launched in May 2021, with great success. As of today, the campaign is nearing the \$80 million mark. To learn more about the objectives of the campaign and how you can play a part in supporting our students and the success of the University well into the future, visit the [Give Rise website](#).
- EMU's award winning NPR-affiliate, WEMU, is holding its fall fundraiser today through Monday, with a goal to raise \$100,000. For today only, there is a special \$25,000 matching gift being offered by a WEMU community champion who is also an EMU alumna. WEMU tends to put the 'fun' in fundraising and this time is no exception. They have an assortment of great thank you gifts including NPR 50th anniversary socks (something that always appeals to a sock collector like me) and an 18 oz. "Jewett Sized" soup mug that includes a collection of soup recipes from the WEMU team and a few others. Connie and I contributed our Texas Pinto Bean Soup recipe and I hear even the WEMU sports broadcast team got into the action. You can get more information at [org](#) and make your gift there too to help keep our great broadcasters and programs on the air.
- As we prepare to celebrate family weekend and welcome parents and families to campus tomorrow through Sunday, EMU Athletics is offering faculty and staff two complimentary tickets to attend Saturday's 2 p.m. football game vs. Texas State. By clicking the [tickets link](#), you can receive two complimentary tickets and purchase any additional tickets for the discounted rate of \$8 each. Young Eagles' fans will be able to participate in Youth Olympics activities before the game,

watch at halftime as the University's newest Hall of Fame members are honored, and then take part in the Parent-Child Touchdown Toss on the field following the game. If you have questions, please contact the Athletics Marketing Office at athletic_marketing@emich.edu or 734.487.3263.

Looking ahead

Thank you for support as we navigate our uncertain world together, while continuing to focus on the bright future ahead for our students, faculty, staff, alumni and University. While there is still much work to do, we look forward to sharing further accomplishments and recognition in the weeks and months ahead. Please stay safe and continue to look out for one another.

James Smith, Ph.D.