Dear UW-River Falls Campus Community,

Time really does fly! Our fall 2021 semester will soon be here. Students will be moving into our residence halls over the next few weeks and campus life will begin again.

I am sure many of you have questions and concerns about campus safety and our COVID-19 protocols. I want to be proactive in communicating to you and addressing those as best we can. Following are some important COVID-19 related updates. Most importantly, I want to reassure you that we are monitoring the evolution of the pandemic and are staying in close contact with our state and local public health authorities.

We consider the health and safety of our students and employees a top priority going into the fall, so here are some of the things you need to know.

- **Fall 2021 COVID-19 Operations Transition Team:** I am charging a mostly familiar group of campus leaders with helping us to sort through the various questions and issues we are facing as we transition into fall semester. Read more about the team here. If you have questions or concerns about fall, please continue to funnel those through the covid19@uwrf.edu inbox.

- **Vaccinations:** UW-River Falls is not mandating vaccines. However, we recognize that vaccines are the most effective tools for the mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic. We recently launched our Protect the Nest campaign aimed at students and we are taking an aggressive approach to incentivizing vaccinations with the goal of reaching a 70% student vaccination rate. We also strongly encourage all employees who can get vaccinated to do so. If you are vaccinated and haven’t let us know yet, please submit your vaccination record here. Employees may also participate in our upcoming on-campus vaccination clinics on August 30 and September 1. Sign up for an appointment at https://piercecountycovid19vaccine.as.me/UWRF.

- **Face coverings:** We do expect the unvaccinated to continue to wear masks indoors on campus when they cannot physically distance at least six feet from others. We are currently still under the guidance of our Administrative Policy AP-06-121. This policy is undergoing review and an updated version will be published before fall semester. Worth noting:
  - The CDC recommends face coverings be worn by everyone, including the fully vaccinated, when a county reaches a substantial or high level of community transmission. At the time of this message, Pierce County is at a moderate level of transmission.
  - Faculty and staff may request (but may not independently require) that students in their class or office space wear face coverings outside of campus policy. It must also be made clear to the students that there are no negative repercussions to them, grading or otherwise, relative to compliance with that request.
  - Vaccination status is confidential and should not be discussed or disclosed outside of a conversation with any employee or student who might self-disclose this information.
  - Joint Committee for Review of Administrative Rules action: a state legislative committee is challenging the UW System’s authority to require things like face coverings or COVID-19 testing. We are working closely with UW System to ensure that our policies and practices are in proper alignment. UW System President Tommy Thompson made this statement last week in response to the JCRAR action.
On-campus testing: We continue to offer free COVID-19 testing on-campus through eTrueNorth for all employees and students as well as for community members. Testing is available in Hagestad Hall from 8 a.m.-noon every day of the work week except Wednesday. Starting August 30, testing will be offered five days a week, Monday-Friday, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Visit www.doineedacovid19test.com to schedule a test.

Thank you for your continued patience and collaboration as we strive to protect one another and safely return to a more normal fall semester. Let’s act as one learning community that values all of its members.

Please continue to refer to https://www.uwrf.edu/Falcons-Forward/Index.cfm for updates and email covid19@uwrf.edu with any questions.

Sincerely,

Maria

Maria Gallo, Ph.D.
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