September 10, 2021

Dear UWRF community,

I am writing with some updates regarding our COVID-19 health and safety operations.

**Launch of 10% prevalence testing** – starting last Tuesday, we launched our protocol requiring at least 10% of our unvaccinated students and employees to get tested. We are analyzing the data and plan to publish case number information early next week. Based on that, we will determine whether we need to increase required testing. In the meantime, below are some additional steps we are taking to keep the campus safe.

**Onsite support for students and employees who test positive** – we are in the process of reactivating our case management system through which those members of campus who test positive are supported. Student Health Services and Student Success are providing additional one-on-one assistance for students.

**Contact tracing, quarantine and isolation** – we have reactivated some of our trained contact tracing staff to support Pierce County Public Health, which is unable to perform this work for our campus. Students are still advised to return to their permanent residence to isolate or quarantine. For those unable to do so, we can help locate off-campus housing alternatives; meanwhile we have determined it prudent to prepare some rooms in the currently vacant Parker Hall to use for isolation if case numbers warrant. In order to better support contact tracing in the classroom, Provost Travis will be sending additional guidance to faculty and instructors later today.

**Protect the Nest vaccinations campaign** – vaccines continue to be the best way to reduce spread of COVID-19 and avoid serious illness, hospitalization or worse. I am proud of our campus as we continue to see our vaccination rate improve every day. Students are at about 48% vaccinated and employees are at about 67%. We can however only count those who have uploaded their vaccine verification on our COVID-19 Portal. *If you have not yet done this, please take a few minutes to login to* [https://covid19.uwrf.edu](https://covid19.uwrf.edu) *and do so now!* I want our employees and students to reach at least 70% as soon as possible, as this will impact what additional safety protocols we may need to adopt. Students, don’t forget about all the great incentive prizes we are making available when we reach 70%!

You can also help by engaging in peer-to-peer conversations with those who have disclosed to you that they are unvaccinated, being mindful that personal health decisions are based on an individual’s values and belief systems, so empathy and understanding are going to be most important in your approach. Here are some helpful articles on how to have those difficult conversations:

- How to talk about COVID-19 vaccines with friends and family | CDC
- How to Talk to Vaccine-Hesitant Loved Ones Right Now
- COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy: 10 tips for talking with patients

I want to thank each of you for your patience and collaboration as we work together as a Falcon Family to keep our campus safe.

Sincerely,

Maria

**Maria Gallo, Ph.D.**
Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-River Falls