Dear UWRF Community,

I am writing to provide significant updates on our COVID-19 operations to aid in keeping everyone informed.

COVID-19 Operations Team
I have changed my charge to the Transition Team, turning it into an ongoing Operations Team and I have expanded membership, including the addition of the Student Government Association President Brigitte Ledferd. See here for the latest membership list. Starting Monday, this group will also be regularly interacting with representatives from all the employee shared governance groups as well as from the college deans’ offices. The goals are to provide ample opportunity for input around decision making points and to increase accurate and more efficient information dissemination to the community.

Vaccination Campaign
We are nearing 78% for employee vaccinations and the number of students who are vaccinated also continues to grow. Yesterday, I sent out a message to all those who we do not have recorded as verified in our system and the response has been overwhelming. Apparently, many students simply had not yet told us they were vaccinated! We are now at 56% of students with verified vaccination records, with more coming in. This is amazing news in terms of helping to keep our campus safe and operating in person! Thank you to everyone who is responding to this request.

It’s not too late to get vaccinated! We will be hosting two more vaccination clinics in the Falcon’s Nest in the UC on Sept. 23 and Sept. 27 from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. These clinics should offer both the Johnson & Johnson (single dose) and Pfizer (two dose) vaccine options. Participants getting Pfizer will need to attend the second dose clinics on Oct. 14 and Oct. 18, from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Appointments are encouraged using this link, but walk-ins are welcome.

On-Campus Testing
We are planning to have a data update webpage active by the end of the week on www.uwrf.edu/Falcons-Forward/. I can report today, based on the data we are able to get from the current testing provider, that as of yesterday, we had tested 1,118 students and employees since we began the 10% prevalence testing of non-vaccinated individuals on September 7. Of those, there have been 62 antigen positive tests – all of them students. This would indicate that we are running a seven-day positivity rate of 5.5%. These data may be slightly skewed in that, in addition to the random prevalence testing, many who are symptomatic are going in to take advantage of the testing service as well. Since we reactivated our case management system on Monday, we have helped 19 students with personalized support. Of those, 100% were symptomatic and 70% of them were not vaccinated. Please note that currently Pierce County has a seven-day positivity rate of 7.1%.

Although we are below the community level, which is encouraging, we have decided to increase required weekly testing for ALL non-vaccinated individuals. We are working with the testing provider to ramp up operations and this will begin as soon as feasible. We will keep you posted. Once activated, this will mean that all students who come to campus (whether they live on or off campus) and any employees who aren’t 100% remote will be obligated to comply with weekly testing. Those who are 100% remote will have to exempt themselves from the testing obligations. The option to do so will be available in our COVID-19 Portal once our new testing protocol is activated.

Classroom Notifications
I know that some instructors and students have experienced confusion regarding how we are managing notifications of close contacts in the classroom. Given the many different types of classes we offer, instructors have been given authority to decide how best to manage their classrooms following these notifications. Please be aware that the university is doing its best to standardize things where possible. The provost is working with faculty and instructors to address these concerns and streamline exposure notifications. Students who are impacted should email covid19@uwrf.edu for support on quarantine guidance.

**Town Halls**
I am planning a Town Hall next week to answer questions and address remaining concerns. Watch your inbox for a separate invitation to the virtual Town Hall event. Meanwhile, if you have questions, please email covid19@uwrf.edu and we will do our best to help you.

Thank you as always for everything you are doing to keep the campus safe.

Sincerely,

Maria

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