Colleagues,

Let me begin with a sincere thank you to each one of you. Despite questions about what fall semester would look like and a few twists along the way, you stepped up and did what we always do here at UW-River Falls -- you went above and beyond for our students, providing them with the best experience possible. Although we continue to learn how we can do even better, students have indicated their appreciation for your efforts by registering in large numbers to return in spring and do it all over again!

As we look ahead to spring semester, here are a few key reminders and updates to consider:

1. **Travel** - University-sponsored travel is permissible on an exception-only basis for both students and employees. If you want to request an exception, please work through your supervisor. All study abroad programs with credit-bearing courses for spring semester have been cancelled. A decision on summer study abroad courses will be made by Feb. 1.

2. **Spring semester** - We will again be offering a blend of online, hybrid and face-to-face classes. At the current time, we are planning to start the semester as scheduled. However, those instructors teaching hybrid or face-to-face classes may wish to delay in-person meetings at the beginning of the semester for a week or two to allow students an opportunity to be tested one or more times before coming to class. This decision is up to the instructor based on the pedagogy of the course, essential need for in-person meetings at the beginning and layout of the learning environment. See Interim Chancellor Foster’s email of Dec. 15 for more details on our spring semester testing plan.

3. **Classroom protocols** - We are continuing with COVID-reduced capacities for all in-person meetings as well as asking all students and employees to continue wearing masks indoors at all times.

4. **Training and technology** - We have heard from several students that, if their class is all online in spring semester, they would prefer some synchronous instruction. Multiple technologies are available for your use, including new options that were not available in fall semester. If you have a committed time listed in the schedule and would like to provide synchronous sessions for students, but need to learn more about how to effectively do this, that there will be several teaching development/training sessions available over J-term. Keep an eye on Falcon Daily as well as the events schedule on the CETL Website. You can also self-enroll in our Digital Learning Environment (DLE) Fundamentals course.

In closing, I want to encourage all of you to please find a way to detach as best as you are able for the next several weeks and focus on time for yourselves and loved ones. This has been an incredibly stressful semester and I do worry about not only the mental health of our students but also that of our employees. Please take care of yourselves.

I wish each of you a Happy New Year as we say goodbye to 2020 and embrace a fresh start and a new chapter in 2021.

Warm regards and happy holidays,

David