March 16, 2020

Dear Campus Community,

This is an important email message. Please review it carefully.

The changes related to the COVID-19 virus have been a whirlwind going into and over the weekend. As you have seen, the Wisconsin and Minnesota school systems have cancelled classes and activities starting this week. April 6 is the target date for re-evaluation for Wisconsin, and Minnesota schools remain closed until March 27.

I acknowledge the added stress that comes from these announcements. I want to take a moment to thank you for your flexibility, patience and understanding as we continue to roll out precautions in the interest of the campus community’s safety and well-being. I am so proud of this campus and the support and care that is being taken by all.

We continue to monitor the situation and remain on heightened alert. Despite rumors, there are currently no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our area. Our emergency response team has been in regular contact with Douglas County Public Health Services, which coordinates with its counterparts across the bridge in St. Louis County, to determine immediate and future safeguards for our campus.

We are, however, implementing additional measures to best ensure the well-being of our employees, our most precious resource. We are committed to:

- Ensuring safety
- Facilitating and supporting alternative work arrangements when possible
- Protecting the assets of the university
- Ensuring continuity of campus operations
- Providing clear and rapid protocols for an intentionally phased approach

As such, the following will be implemented between now (Monday, March 16) and Wednesday, March 18, and remain in effect until Sunday, April 12:

- **MINIMIZE CAMPUS STAFFING:** We are moving immediately to minimize on-campus staffing as soon as possible beginning today. My intention is to make it possible for as many people to work from home as is feasible, while still assuring that the students,
faculty and staff who remain on campus are supported. I want to reassure the students who have chosen to remain on campus that they will have the residential and food service support needed in the coming weeks. Our minimized staffing model involves the following action steps:

- **TELECOMMUTING POLICY:** During the weekend, UW System's existing policy on telecommuting was rescinded, which allows individual campuses to enact their own policy to fit their specific needs. Our HR team has worked through last night and this morning to update our policy and finalize our telecommuting request form. **Please consult with your supervisor concerning your individual situation and to complete the form.** The policy will be in effect until at least April 13. In the meantime, the situation will remain under monitoring.

- **TODAY (MARCH 16) AND TOMORROW (MARCH 17):** Employees can continue to work from campus today (Monday, March 16) and tomorrow (Tuesday, March 17), if needed. Please coordinate with your supervisor. Should the situation change, we will inform you immediately.

- **LEAVE:** Employees who cannot telecommute but prefer to be off campus should plan to use leave time.

- **SOCIAL DISTANCING:** We will immediately implement “social distancing” best practices to the greatest extent possible for any necessary in-person meetings. Social distancing means remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet/2 meters) from others where possible.

- **VISITOR PROTOCOLS:** We will be developing visitor protocols for campus visitors. More information will be forthcoming.

- **CANCELLATION OF EVENTS:** All campus-sponsored events and outside rentals are cancelled until April 13. Many had already been cancelled last week. Please reference the News Center for details.

- **LIMITED MEETING SIZE:** While guidelines differ as to the maximum size of groups, the ultimate goal is to minimize in-person meetings when possible and make use of technology to facilitate communication.

- **TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS:** Travel restrictions outlined in my March 12 message remain in effect.

- **TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS:** We are preparing technology solutions for alternative work arrangements, such as purchasing a site license for Zoom and holding the following technology training sessions:

  Monday, March 16 and Tuesday, March 17 in Swenson Hall, Room 2020
  - 11 a.m.: Zoom
  - 1 p.m.: OneDrive
  - 2 p.m.: Microsoft Teams
  - 3 p.m.: General technology questions and help
Please continue to practice wellness efforts to avoid this and other viruses, such as washing your hands, using hand sanitizer, coughing/sneezing into your elbow, and staying home if you’re feeling sick. Also carefully consider your activity outside of the workplace for possible risks. The CDC indicates that these steps, while simple, are some of the most powerful in combating the spread of the virus. More information on how to protect yourself and others can be found on the CDC website.

Also be sure to regularly check www.uwsuper.edu/coronavirus for information about the coronavirus, precautions that are being taken and prevention measures you can take.

In times of stress like these, be sure to take some time for self-care, whether that’s some simple breathing exercises, calling a loved one, or going for a walk. Taking care of ourselves will help us take care of each other, which is so important in times like these.

More information will be forthcoming regarding safe practices. Please continue to watch your email.

Be well!

Renée

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