April 13, 2020

To: UW System Chancellors, Provosts, CBOs, HR Directors, SSAOs, LL/PIOs, UWSA colleagues
CC: UW System Emergency Operation Center
Fr: UW System President Ray Cross
Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Good afternoon. We have some important new information and updates I’d like to share with you regarding the UW System’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

• Financial Impacts from COVID-19. Over the weekend, you may have heard or read stories in the media regarding the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our institutions, including the overall estimated $168 million impact across the UW System. I wanted to highlight a few facts about this information for your benefit.
  o These are point-in-time estimates and short-term. These are costs for the spring semester only, as estimated by our financial teams across the UW System.
  o While these numbers do include costs such as housing and dining refunds, parking refunds, forgone athletics revenue, technology purchases, and student income continuation payments, they do not include reduced expenses or any potential federal or state stabilization funding.
  o To date, the federal government has approved $47 million in direct institutional aid for Wisconsin’s higher education institutions that will assist in our budgeting efforts.

• Changes to Admission Policies. Today we announced a series of changes to admissions policies that will make it easier for students to enroll this fall. The changes include reducing the undergraduate application fee effective immediately for all UW System institutions except UW-Madison, accepting unofficial high school transcripts for admission consideration, and holding students harmless for changes in admissions testing, grading formats, and other standard requirements as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We recognize that in this time of uncertainty, prospective students will have a lot of questions, so we are also expanding efforts to ensure students have resources available to help guide them now and into the fall semester. Students seeking to learn more about the 13 universities that comprise the UW System and get up-to-date information on campus admissions practices can visit the UW HELP website.

UW HELP will also be offering a number of virtual services to students such as virtual one-on-one consultations and online office hours to help students complete their applications.
• **Waiver of Emergency Reserve/Contingency Fund.** We have adopted an interim policy to temporarily waive the requirement for UW institutions to maintain a minimum emergency reserve/contingency fund for students studying abroad. Given the need to use resources to assist students abroad during COVID-19, UW System administration has suspended the requirement to maintain the emergency reserve/contingency fund until the end of the pandemic.

• **Waiver of Certain Lawton Undergraduate Minority Retention Grant Program Requirements.** The Lawton Undergraduate Minority Retention Grant Program provides financial assistance to statutorily designated minority undergraduate students to improve their opportunities for retention and graduation and reduce the burden of student debt. Students awarded this grant include those attending courses on campus, online, or studying abroad.

To accommodate circumstances presented by COVID-19, which disrupted study abroad participation and other instructional activities, we have waived certain requirements regarding enrollment in and/or completion of 24 credits per academic year.

You can review the interim policy for the Minority Retention Grant Program on the UWSA COVID-19 policy resources web page.

• **Campus Snapshot.** We have attached our weekly spreadsheet of what each institution is doing regarding COVID-19 preparedness. You can view this point-in-time snapshot on our COVID-19 website, which includes event cancellations, alternative instruction, and travel abroad changes and updates.

As always, please keep checking our COVID-19 website for the latest information and resources, including some new web links. You can also view a new video from me on YouTube, acknowledging the extraordinary extra efforts by our faculty to provide education to our students this spring.

I hope everyone had a good weekend. I greatly appreciate all you’re doing to help during this challenging time. Please be safe, be kind, and stay engaged.