May 8, 2020

To: UW System Chancellors, Provosts, CBOs, HR Directors, LL/PIOs, UWSA colleagues

CC: UW System Emergency Operation Center

Fr: UW System President Ray Cross

Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Good afternoon. Here are the latest updates regarding the UW System’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Blueprint for the UW System Beyond COVID-19.** Throughout this crisis, you’ve heard chancellors, other leaders, and me talk about the actions we’ve taken to respond to one of the most challenging times we’ve ever faced. I am proud of all you’ve done to help get us through this pandemic.

  During our Board of Regents meeting and in communications sent out yesterday, we started the conversation about what we need to do to thrive on the other side of COVID-19 – and to continue to provide the world-class education, research, and outreach that generations have treasured and future generations will enjoy.

  We know we must act now, because our very future depends on it. The encouraging news is we can build off the positive steps taken in the last several years to improve and centralize our operations, adapt academic programs based on enrollments, and provide more collaborative online degrees. We must accelerate these initiatives to confront the challenging financial situation that lies ahead.

  The Blueprint for the UW System Beyond COVID-19 addresses three main priorities:

  1. First, the UW System must refine the missions of its comprehensive universities to provide greater institutional distinctiveness and identity.
  2. Second, the UW System must consolidate and streamline common administrative operational functions.
  3. Third, the UW System must create a unified strategic online education delivery model.

  You will note a common theme – the increased role of the UW System. To more rapidly achieve the systemwide efficiencies we all need to survive, the System must play a more direct role in operations at the campus level and leverage the advantages of being a system.

  We’ve developed a rationale, recommendation, responsibility, and timeline for each of these priorities. You can read the details in our Blueprint for the University of Wisconsin System Beyond COVID-19.
• **Delays to Criminal Background Checks.** Widespread public office closures and service reductions due to the COVID-19 public health emergency have impeded the ability of criminal background check vendors to deliver complete background checks within the timeframe normally required for our hiring process. *This interim policy* establishes a uniform practice for what steps an institution may take when the completion of a full background check is delayed.

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

• **Stay Alert Against COVID-19 Scams.** Our IT staff continues to provide critical reminders on how to protect against COVID-19 scams. Please be vigilant to ensure we do not become victims of cyberattacks.

• **Employee Assistance.** Finally, I want remind you that our Employee Assistance Program website is available 24/7 to all employees. The program has specific resources to assist with coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other issues.

Please continue to check our COVID-19 website, where we’ve recently updated our furlough frequently asked questions. And don’t forget our tool for UW System and UWSA employees to ask questions about coronavirus-specific topics, which can be accessed on the FAQ webpage (campus credentials log-in required).

I hope everyone has a good weekend and a pleasant Mother’s Day. As always, thank you for your incredible efforts and perseverance during this challenging time. Please be safe, be kind, and stay engaged.