

UWEC response to COVID-19

First response

As COVID-19 was spreading around the world, the United States had seen relatively low amount of cases. The first email that had been sent out to Eau Claire students about COVID-19 was on January 27 2020. It was a fact sheet about COVID-19 from Timothy Boehnen. At this time many people on campus including myself did not know a lot about COVID and were not aware of how dangerous it is.

UW-Eau Claire monitoring novel coronavirus outbreak


As many are aware from ongoing news reports, a novel (new) coronavirus, named 2019-nCoV, is causing an outbreak of respiratory illness that originated in the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. This outbreak began in early December 2019 and continues to expand in scope, with more than 2,700 confirmed coronavirus infections in more than a dozen countries and 81 deaths in China caused by the new virus. While five cases of the virus have been confirmed in the U.S. as of today, none have been confirmed in Wisconsin.

What is UW-Eau Claire doing at its Eau Claire and Rice Lake campuses in response to the new coronavirus outbreak?

In the interest of the well-being of members of our campus community, UW-Eau Claire staff from Risk Management and Safety, Student Health Service, Housing and Residence Life, and the Center for International Education are taking a proactive approach to this situation. We are working closely with officials from the Eau Claire City-County Health Department and the Barron County Department of Health and Human Services in monitoring the outbreak and staying current with the latest recommendations.

Chancellor Jim Schmidt response

The first email that the students at UWEC, UWEC-BC, and Marshfield had received from the Chancellor's office was on March 11, 2020. It was about how the school was contacting the health department and monitoring COVID cases in the area. At the time there was no confirmed cases in Eau Claire County or Baron County. They continued to give us updates and provided us with links to the CDC website and UWEC COVID webpage. The next day, Chancellor Schmidt announced he was holding a open forum and was answering questions about the schools future. Students were encouraged to watch the forum and asked questions online.



Online classes

On March 12th 2020, UWEC had official gone to all online classes. They announced that all classes will be suspended from March 23rd through April 3rd 2020. All classes that had been in-person were now online. The plan was to resume in-person on April 20th 2020. When I read this email I was excited that school was cancelled for an extended period of time but I was also very sad because I enjoyed going to in-person classes.

Today, in consultation with Student Leaders, I am announcing the following changes:

Academic Classes and Spring Break

- There will be no campus-based, in-person classes at all three locations next week. In addition, Spring Break will be extended a second week, [from March 23 through April 3](#). This means there will be no face-to-face classes [from Saturday, March 14 through Friday, April 3](#). **All existing online classes will be held as scheduled during this period.**
- Classes will resume [April 6](#) and [will be offered entirely online through Friday, April 17](#). During that time, we will monitor the progress of COVID-19 and determine whether in-person classes can resume [Monday, April 20](#), or whether they will continue to be offered online. We will make that determination no later than [April 15](#). The deans of our colleges are working now to determine how to address internships, clinicals, practica and student teaching, which are expected to continue throughout the semester.

Campus Services and Student Employment

- [Through April 20](#) all campus locations [will remain open](#). Students may choose to remain in the residence halls or in the community; food service,

The next update was on March 20th 2020. At this time there was 150 cases in Wisconsin and only 1 in the Eau Claire County. In this email, Chancellor Schmidt explained that UWEC, UWEC-BC and Marshfield will all be going to fully online the rest of the school year. At that time they had also cancelled the commencement ceremony for graduating students. They also planned to close all resident halls on April 4th and gave refunds to students that left the dorms.

When I read this email I was kinda shocked, I was expecting to go back to school again on the 20th. I think the school handled the situation very well and that it made me feel confident in the Universities ability to keep its students safe.



UW-Eau Claire will also make sure students who leave the residence hall receive pro-rated refunds for lodging, food service and parking. I know that many students and families are facing financial hardships and this is the right thing to do. You can read the [announcement by UW System](#) about the refunds; we will be reaching out to students with more details, including how the credits will be applied to any outstanding balances. We are also in talks with Barnes & Noble to make it easier for students to return rented books. Stay tuned.

Parking for all permit holders—including all students, faculty and staff—will also be refunded on a pro-rated basis. “G” parking permit holders will be contacted with the choice of retaining their parking space through August or receiving a pro-rated refund. Parking in “G” stalls will continue to be enforced.

When 2020 began we couldn't have imagined a semester that would unfold as this one has. But I have been inspired by the countless acts of kindness and notes of support that I've seen and received over the past week. I know that we will come back together in April—online—and finish our semester Blugold strong!

Residence Halls will close [April 4](#)

I know many students—both in the residence halls and in the community—have had questions about whether to stay in Eau Claire or to head home. Because we will now complete the semester online, we are encouraging students currently in the residence halls to head home no later than [Saturday, April 4](#). This will help us keep everyone safer.

We know that some students don't have that option, however. **Students who have need for an extended stay**, may register by following instructions provided by Housing and Residence Life. We will not be closing our doors or asking anyone to leave who cannot. Students who stay may be asked to move to different rooms, as we will be closing some of the halls in order to reduce maintenance. Those students who need to remain in the residence halls will have meals delivered to the lobby of their building. We are here for you.

Students will receive an email from Housing and Residence Life with instructions on how to check out. They will be asked to sign up for a move-out time so we can maintain social distance and protect the health of our students and their loved ones.

Online classes through the end of the semester

So today I am announcing that all classes will be taught online for the remainder of the semester. There will be no face-to-face classes through [May](#). We are also looking to transition all summer courses to online format in the spirit of continued caution.


Our faculty have been working hard to transition all classes online. For students unsure about what that will mean for their learning, we are also setting up resources to help students needing to adjust to distance learning. The Center for Writing Excellence, Math Lab and Academic Skills Center are developing plans to move their resources to an online environment. Also, the LTS Helpdesk provides one-on-one assistance for students who may need extra support in using Canvas for online courses. We are also identifying additional resources for students to help them prepare for distance learning. You'll be hearing more about those resources by the end of March. A reminder: online classes begin [April 6](#). Faculty will be contacting students in advance with more information about what you can expect.

We are also postponing our [May 23](#) commencement ceremonies. Graduating seniors WILL be able to complete the semester and graduate. We will,

2020 Fall semester

On June 5th 2020, Chancellor Schmidt sent an email out regarding to the fall semester. In that email, UWEC along with UW-Stout and UW-River Falls were all going back to in-person classes. The semester would start on September 2nd 2020.

When I read this I was very excited because it meant that we could be back in-person instead of online. It also meant that I could go back to campus and go to the library or get food at Davies. It was very important news to hear for lots of students including myself.



This message is being sent on behalf of UW-Eau Claire, UW-River Falls and UW-Stout.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, June 5, 2020

UW-Eau Claire, UW-River Falls, UW-Stout welcome students back to campus for fall semester

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, UW-River Falls and UW-Stout announced they will welcome students to campus for the fall semester.

All three universities, which completed their respective spring semesters using alternative delivery methods due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are putting comprehensive safety plans in place to allow faculty, staff and students to return to campus.

The leadership teams from the universities collaborated and shared expertise to create plans that address the dynamic situation brought on by the global pandemic.

"In-person engagement is crucial to a transformative educational experience, and we are pleased our comprehensive planning efforts will enable us to welcome students back to campus this fall," UW-Eau Claire Chancellor James Schmidt said. "The safety of our faculty, staff and students at UW-Eau Claire is our No. 1 priority, and UW-Stout and UW-River Falls have the same goals for their campuses.

"Working together, with a common goal to support higher education and our communities in western Wisconsin, allowed us to focus and deliver strong safety plans for each campus in a short period of time."

All three campuses will implement health and safety measures that include physical distancing and the use of masks.

"As Wisconsin's polytechnic university, it is tremendously important to us that our students are able to be on campus this fall and to ensure applied learning opportunities continue regardless of instructional delivery method," said UW-Stout Chancellor Katherine Frank. "Much of our learning is hands-on, and includes the use of laboratories, studios, and related facilities. We have worked for months to plan for our fall opening to protect the health and safety of our students, faculty, staff and visitors while remaining true to our mission."

At UW-Stout, density studies have been completed for all classrooms, laboratories and studio spaces to ensure students and instructors can maintain safe physical distancing. Plans are being put in place for additional equipment and technology in learning spaces to support effective and safe instruction. UW-Stout students will experience a combination of face to face, hybrid and online learning in the fall.

"UW-River Falls prides itself on student engagement and experiential learning, so we are prioritizing delivery of in-person instruction to the extent possible, while ensuring we mitigate risks to our students, employees and community," said UW-River Falls Chancellor Dean Van Galen. "We are grateful for our strong relationship with our Public Health directors and are closely following their guidance regarding all measures being taken."

UW-River Falls has a strong history of effective engagement of students in its academic programs and will continue this commitment in fall 2020. Classes will be delivered via a mix of in-person, alternative or online delivery, and blended modes. The method of instruction for each class will be determined based on instructor input on course content to ensure meaningful student experiences as well as factors of health risks and space availability. Students on campus can expect to see changes such as revised classroom occupancy limits; increased cleaning, sanitation and hygiene protocols; and communications regarding best practices and expectations.

All three campuses are consulting with local health officials to establish plans for testing symptomatic students and using long-established contact-tracing protocols in place for managing communicable diseases. Testing and tracing protocols will continue to be refined during the summer in consultation with health partners and the UW System.

University housing will be available to students at all three campuses. UW-Eau Claire and UW-River Falls begin classes Sept. 2 and UW-Stout's classes begin Sept. 9.

University of Wisconsin
Eau Claire
www.uwec.edu

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
River Falls
www.uwrf.edu

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
STOUT
WISCONSIN'S POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
www.uwstout.edu

2020 Fall semester continued

As we got closer to the start of the semester, the school introduced their BLUGOLD Flight Plan. This includes wearing a mask on campus, social distancing and the BLUGOLD protocol app. All of these were put in place to keep students and staff safe. At the beginning of the semester each student was to sign the petition and fill out the app each day. In each classroom, Davies and the Library there are limited seating options. Another requirement is students living in the dorms must have 2 COVID-19 tests a week.



COVID cases among Students and Staff

As of today December 11 2020, there have been 4 total cases among faculty/staff and 634 total student cases reported at UWEC. They have recorded a total of 28,874 COVID-19 at the UWEC campus. They offer tests at Mcphee and Davies. They also offer PCR and Antigen tests at school.

For students that have tested positive or have in close contact are quarantined in Putnam hall or stuck in their dorms. These last couple weeks there has been a spike in Isolated students on campus.



Fall Semester so far

So far the semester has been crazy. I would have never expected that I would be taking all online classes and not be in-person. For lots of people, including myself, it has been challenging and something that we have never experienced in our lives. It has been very hard this year for many students to get the adequate education they need to pass their classes. Lots of people, including myself, have dropped classes or withdrawn from classes because of online learning. With everything going on I feel safe and confident while on campus at UWEC.

