

Week of September 21

Trustees -

With our scheduled meeting tomorrow, I'll be brief here.

I traveled north this week with my Chief of Staff Jim Thelen to visit Fort Kent and Presque Isle, kicking off what UMS Executive Director of Communications Dan Demeritt has coined my "[Keep it Up](#)" tour of all UMS campuses over the next month. At each university, I'll be meeting with our presidents, hearing reports from our staff serving in EOC/Incident Commander rolls, and visiting classes and touring facilities to see first-hand how our pandemic-adjusted operations are working.

What I can report already is that seeing first-hand the communal dedication at UMFK and UMPI to our health and safety protocols -- our testing, face-covering, and social distancing requirements chief among them -- helps to explain how we've gotten through four weeks of classes so far without a virus outbreak. The reality of our students and faculty only half-filling our classrooms, with their noses and mouths covered, is sobering, to be sure. But their engagement with other students and panelists joining them remotely through interactive video technology for a robust academic experience is a testament to their resilience and desire for as normal an academic experience as possible (not to mention clear proof that our \$2.6M in interactive classroom technology upgrades over the summer was a necessary investment, among many others, to permit our safe resumption of in-person classes).

I returned from the County with great conviction that Presidents Deb Hedeem and Ray Rice and their faculties, staff, and students have what it takes to get us through the semester safely together. (And Trustees Martin, Collins, and Doak will especially appreciate that Jim and I each returned with a 10-pound bag of the storied Caribou Russet as well!)

As I noted, there will be much more to cover in our Board meeting tomorrow. For now, and here, I'll close with a note about our continued COVID testing. Starting September 14, we moved into a random-sample and directed testing phase that will continue through several rounds, every 10 days or so, through Thanksgiving. With the advice of our Scientific Advisory Board and university statisticians, we're randomly selecting roughly 10 percent of our UMS community for testing every 10 days; provided everyone selected is actually tested, test results will allow us to calculate, with a high degree of statistical confidence, a prevalence rate of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in our communities. This testing is intended only for students, faculty, and staff who have on-campus interaction with other members of our communities. Directed testing, as well as additional amplified testing, will be used to test individuals and groups who may face higher-than-normal risk, and was used most recently for our various operations in York County, which as you know has experienced several localized virus outbreaks over the last month. (In case you missed it, [yesterday's media release](#) about our testing efforts to date provides a good overview of how all of this testing works together to keep our communities safe.)

We say it often, but we're truly all in this together. The testing I describe above must be mandatory to be effective. To allow any member of our on-campus community to opt out of testing at this point without good cause would threaten public health and risk undermining the ongoing statistical validity of our testing and virus prevalence models. We cannot operate safely or responsibly without this level of commitment to testing. I am grateful that the vast majority of our students, faculty, staff, and labor partners have willingly embraced this responsibility. We will work firmly with those who have yet to do so, because the public health of our university communities in the midst of an ongoing global pandemic does not allow for exception.

Enjoy the rest of the weekend. I look forward to our time together tomorrow.

Regards,  
Dan