

UW System open for fall semester

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UW System campuses will open to students for the fall semester, but will move large classes online and reserve space in the dorms to quarantine students for COVID-19.

The guidelines will allow campuses to host athletic events according to NCAA recommendations, but also acknowledging state and local health rules would take precedent.

“We know the on-campus experience is what our students want,” said System President Ray Cross. “At the same time, we must all recognize that our universities will be different this fall than what we’re used to and there will be campus-based decisions on how to best address particular issues.”

It will ultimately be up to university chancellors to determine what each campus’ in-person fall semester will look like, but the system’s framework is meant to establish a general point to work from.

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Some of the recommendations include:

*Reserving at least 5 percent of dorm capacity available for potential quarantine isolation space.

*Maximizing face-to-face instruction, but moving courses online that would have 50 or more students per class.

*Developing an attendance excuse policy for sick students.

*Training staff and faculty on anticipating “bias related to diverse communities” and determining proactive support measures.

*Maintaining virtual access to student mental and physical health services.

But the recommendations do not offer guidance for how the system will conduct coronavirus testing and contact tracing on campuses, instead saying those plans are “still under study.”

UWS added its recommendations “reflect a point in time” and are still in progress and subject to change as pandemic conditions develop.

The UW System also faces a budget crunch brought on by the virus, with the latest estimates showing a system-wide loss of more than \$100 million through the summer even after factoring in cost-savings measures and federal aid.

Rob Cramer, vice president for Administration, told reporters reopening in-person campus education would help system finances through the crisis.

“We’ve been looking at different scenarios and this is one that is favorable but also reflects what people are hoping to have happen at our communities on campus,” Cramer said. “Obviously having students in person on campus helps with our financial imperative.”

While campus chancellors are not tethered to system guidelines, Cramer suggested the recommendations “carry a lot of weight,” as it was created in part with employee recommendations.

A spokeswoman for Gov. Tony Evers didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

See the list of recommendations:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/200614RECOMMENDATIONS.pdf>

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