

UW System: Reports very strong day 1 enrollment

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MADISON, Wis.—University of Wisconsin System President Tommy Thompson today unveiled enrollment figures from the first day of the fall semester that suggest a vast majority of students have responded positively to the return of on-campus instruction.

A total of nearly 126,000 students enrolled at the 10 universities that began on-campus instruction Sept. 2. The numbers are preliminary and unofficial. Including estimates for the other three universities and expected registration additions across all universities after the first day of classes, UW System is estimating 165,897 students for fall 2020.

The UW System does not typically release enrollment figures from the first day of instruction but is doing so because of widespread interest in campus activities during the fall 2020 semester amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The figures suggest the potential for a modest decline of roughly 1 percent in enrollment compared to 2019, although 2020 enrollment remains subject to change given the fluid nature of the pandemic.

Thompson said the data demonstrate the value of a UW System education.

“The enrollment numbers show students are eager to return to campus and resume or begin their studies,” Thompson said. “The on-campus experience is the right thing for the University of Wisconsin, and our students agree.”

The 10 UW System universities that began instruction Sept. 2 and their Day 1 enrollment counts are UW-Eau Claire (10,932), UW-Green Bay (7,251), UW-Madison (44,010), UW-Milwaukee (23,637), UW-Parkside (4,337), UW-Platteville (7,548), UW-

River Falls (5,717), UW-Stevens Point (8,110), UW-Superior (2,500), and UW-Whitewater (11,513).

First-day enrollment makes up about 95 percent of the enrollment in a given semester, with another five percent enrolling after the first day. These first-day 2020 enrollment figures should not be compared to final enrollment figures from 2019.

UW-La Crosse, UW Oshkosh, and UW-Stout begin instruction next week. Official enrollment figures will be collected later in September, verified, and released at a later date.

“These enrollment numbers are very encouraging,” said Andrew S. Petersen, president of the Board of Regents. “I want to thank our students for having faith in us and our faculty and staff for their hard work over the summer and what we know will be an unconventional semester.”

System universities are delivering education in three ways: in-person, online, and a hybrid of the two.

President Thompson had previously announced a COVID-19 testing program, excluding UW-Madison, that includes 34,000 tests for symptomatic students and 317,000 additional tests for students living in residence halls to detect possible spread of the virus. By Sept. 2, the UW System had received and begun to distribute 44,000 tests and 36 testing machines. UW System anticipates receiving approximately 20,000 tests weekly for use in the residence halls.