

[Everyone List] May 8 Update: Patience, please

Everyone <everyone-bounces@chem.wisc.edu>
on behalf of

JUDITH N BURSTYN <burstyn@chem.wisc.edu>

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To: everyone mailman <everyone@chem.wisc.edu>

 3 attachments (10 MB)

EMO31-BadgerBounceBack.pdf; EMO28-SaferAtHome.pdf; ATT00001.txt;

I am writing today to update you on campus operations and to ask that you exercise patience. I understand how unsettling it is not to know what will happen and how eager you are to get back to a more normal routine. We are all in this situation together, and the reality is that we aren't in control.

Your department leaders are fielding many unnecessary inquiries about reentry, and it is not a good use of their time to respond individually at a moment when there is no guidance that we can offer. As I stated last week, the campus planning process will be lengthy, and we cannot act without guidance from campus leadership.

Right now, all I can offer to all of you is reassurance that campus leadership is working hard to develop plans for limited operations, and that as soon as we receive guidance, the department leadership teams will develop local implementation processes. We will seek input as we deem appropriate given the guidelines. My warning is that we will not be returning to our previous state: for the foreseeable future everything that can continue to be done remotely must be done remotely.

Department leadership and the COOP (Continuity of Operations) team are actively monitoring the situation and will notify you when it is appropriate to plan a return to limited operations. Please do not hesitate to ask questions through the anonymous suggestion box: <https://suggestions.chem.wisc.edu/> We will answer anonymous questions at the upcoming virtual department meeting on Tuesday, May 12.

Re-entry on our campus is going to be severely restricted, carefully staged, and nothing is taking place without meeting the criteria required under Governor Evers' Safer At Home and Badger Bounce Back orders, which are appended. The Badger Bounce Back order describes the conditions that must be met to lift the Safer At Home order, which currently extends until May 26.

Our chancellor is guided by the experts in our School of Medicine and Public Health and by the state Department of Public Health. The expertise on our campus is being utilized to help meet the governor's strict criteria for reopening. Testing capacity is increasing daily, drawing on public and private local resources. But the number of tests that are being conducted daily are not yet meeting the governor's requirements and the fraction of positive tests has only recently begun to decline. The public pressure to reopen prematurely is likely to exacerbate a bad situation. The amount of testing is

inadequate to reveal the true number of active cases, and if the number of active cases is not low enough at the time when restrictions are relaxed, we are likely to see a rapid resurgence of the virus and another equally draconian shut down. If such a second shut down is not politically acceptable, what we will get instead are many deaths.

I am personally not willing to risk the lives of anyone in our department by premature and unplanned restoration of activities, and the Chancellor feels the same about the campus as a whole. She is overseeing a well-organized planning process: two committees are working on campus guidelines, one overseeing all operations and the other focused on research. The committees are coordinating effectively to ensure that campus services are available for a staged research restoration process. Orders for PPE are being controlled centrally, and we are not allowed to compete with our hospitals or public service first responders for materials that they may need. Campus supplies were diverted toward public safety needs, and campus is working on plans to resupply those departments, including ours, that contributed our supplies when they were needed. They are also working to identify those materials that will be ordered centrally through MDS for distribution to campus.

You may expect that any restoration of limited operations will be staged and will roll out slowly, that applications for permission to come to campus will be required, and that there will be significant changes to how you are expected to behave and work while on campus.

Judith

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