**Office of the President**
1700 Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1559
608-262-2321
rcross@uwsa.edu
www.wisconsin.edu

March 19, 2020

To:     UW System Chancellors, Provosts, CBOs, HR Directors, SSAOs, LL/PIOs, UW System Cabinet, UW System colleagues

CC:     UW System Emergency Operation Center

Fr:     UW System President Ray Cross

Re:     Coronavirus (COVID-19) Preparedness Update

Due to the unprecedented nature of this public health emergency and the strain it is putting on all of your institutions, we need to give you every tool we can, including advocating for and delivering regulatory relief and flexibility from state or federal law, Board of Regents policies, and for other deadlines and operational issues.

- **Extension of Institutional Deadlines.** We will be extending some of the most critical institutional deadlines your campuses will be facing soon for a number of system-wide initiatives. Please see the attached document for a listing of those system-wide initiatives and extensions.

- **Regulatory Flexibility and Relief.** I have been in discussions with Board leadership, and they have authorized me to temporarily suspend certain provisions of Regent Policy Documents and to request suspension of the provisions of any administrative rule which would prevent, hinder, or delay necessary actions to respond to the public health emergency or the abnormal economic disruption. These actions will be retroactively approved by the Board of Regents at the April board meeting.

  Some federal and state agencies have already issued guidance on extensions, waivers, or flexibilities that are being provided to institutions of higher education. We have created a COVID-19 Interim Policy Resources website that will be populated in the coming days to house already granted regulatory flexibilities for your staff to access and use.

  All requests will be monitored by a team at UW System and will be routed accordingly for evaluation. Determinations will be posted to the web site, along with flexibilities or waivers that have already been granted by state or federal agencies.

  As your institutions identify needs for regulatory flexibility, such as extensions to deadlines or waivers of requirements, whether from federal or state law, Board of Regent policy or System policy, please submit requests to me at rcross@uwsa.edu, and also please copy David Volz. These requests should be submitted by Chancellors or their designee and should identify the type of relief requested with a detailed justification and point of contact at the institution.

  Please contact UW System Administrative Policies and Special Projects Director Stefan Fletcher or UW System Director of Compliance Katie Ignatowski with any questions.

- **Reimbursements for Housing and Dining.** All UW System institutions will refund the prorated charges for housing and dining for the remainder of the spring semester for those students who have vacated their respective UW institutions.

  Prorated reimbursements will exclude the period of the originally scheduled spring break and shall be issued by the close of the spring academic semester. Due to issues related to the awarding of financial aid, crediting these funds toward future semesters in lieu of a refund is not an option.

  Should you have any questions, please reach out to Sean Nelson, UWSA Vice President for Finance, at [snelson@uwsa.edu](mailto:snelson@uwsa.edu) or via phone at 608-262-7540.

- **IT Security Reminder.** Our IT staff have been doing an excellent job monitoring phishing scams and other IT security issues. For example, an Android app that masquerades as the popular John's Hopkins University map to track confirmed cases of COVID-19 is actually ransomware, i.e. malicious software designed to block access to a computer system until a sum of money is paid.

  This particular ransomware locks up the phone and demands $100 in bitcoin to unlock it. The malware allows the operator to exfiltrate call and text logs and remotely activate microphones and cameras. If victims do not pay within 48 hours, the malware indicates it will erase all data on the phone. Users need to be careful installing offered mobile apps, particularly from unofficial app stores.

  Working safely while working remotely has always been one of our top goals with telecommuting. Please see the attached top five best practices for working remote in a safe manner.

Also please remember, in addition to making more updates to our COVID-19 web site, we have a new tool for UW System and UWSA employees to ask questions about coronavirus-specific topics you'd like us to address. You can access this link on the COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) webpage. This will require you to log in with your campus credentials. Finally we have created an index of my past memos and posted those on the web site so people can access information I've provided in the past several weeks.

We are extremely grateful for all your efforts during this difficult time. Please stay as healthy and as safe as you can while working through this crisis, and I will continue to send out these updates as more information becomes available.