



Report of the UW-La Crosse Faculty Representative Report April 24, 2020

Report on Second UW System Covid-19 Meeting for Faculty and Staff Representatives

Source of Content

Information in this report was gathered from the meeting of April 24, 2020. The contents reflect President Cross' update to campus representatives participating in the meeting as well as discussions that resulted from questions raised by some of the participants. The 8 items listed reflect my recollections. Perhaps there are additional points that I have missed. **Anyone who has a question or ideas, particularly regarding some item I have listed, is free to email me.**

Major Points

The ordering of the following items from 1 to 8 is of no importance. Additionally, I am trying to provide a useful update: I am not concerned about any overlap between the various statements.

1. **In this meeting, we were able to get a glimpse of the severity of the cuts to faculty and staff on some of our campuses.** Examples: 1) a participant indicated that furloughs at UW-Whitewater will mean roughly a 6% cut in faculty salaries; b) UW-Madison's administrative leadership apparently indicated that it would have preferred reductions in FTEs as well as furloughs; c) an individual from UW-Milwaukee expressed concern over the extreme hardship faced by lower-paid staff, and offered the example of staff making \$35,000/yr being reduced from 100% of nominal salary to 80%, or even 75%, of salary. Cross suggested that individuals who are put on a consecutive furlough can now get unemployment insurance immediately, and could possibly make more money than if they worked for the furlough period.
2. **Cross: The political "partisanship" that currently exists at all levels of government is not very constructive.** In general, Republicans are concerned about reopening the economy, and Democrats are more focused on health and safety. As a result, not much is being done.
3. **Cross: "I am confident that we will return to face-to-face in the fall [Fall, 2020]."** Cross tempered this comment by indicating that this is just his opinion, and there are many factors that indicate that what will actually happen is uncertain.
4. **Decline in applications to the UW System is a major concern.** There has been a decline in applications across the campuses as a result of the Coronavirus Crisis.

5. **One participant asked about students who may not want to physically return in fall, out of concern for their safety.** Cross' response was that the System is very concerned for students, staff and faculty, especially for faculty, because many faculty tend to be in a higher risk group. Cross commented on the potential liability to the System in the event that someone is critically harmed as a result of returning. He suggested a number of possibilities to potentially mitigate potential Covid-19 risks, including, but not limited to: ongoing [perhaps weekly] C-19 screening of faculty, staff and students; limiting class size; continuing to wear protective gear, and maintaining distance during interaction.
6. **What about the 2% pay adjustment scheduled for January 1, 2021?** Cross: right now, the pay increase is still "on." HOWEVER, the 2% pay increase will very likely be rescinded. The Legislative Fiscal Bureau, which normally meets in June, will actually meet in May. When it meets, the Fiscal Bureau will report that Wisconsin's revenue projections are "way down." Major budget cuts will be made as a result, and the promised pay increase for state workers will have to be rescinded. There will very likely be cuts to all state agencies. The federal government's policy is to hold universities "harmless" with respect to cuts arising from the Covid 19 Crisis. However, the governor would have to make a formal request to the U.S. Department of Education asking that Wisconsin's educational institutions be "held harmless," and Ray does not believe Governor Evers will do this.
7. **On a temporary basis, SAT and ACT requirements for student applicants have been waived [until July, 2020?].**
8. **Staff question: "Can an individual employee who is able donate his/her unused sick leave to another employee who cannot afford to pay their health insurance premiums?"** Cross' response was that this is not something that he knows is currently possible, but the System needs to investigate and consider this option.

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