July 14, 2020

Dear Mayor Barrett:

As leaders of the Milwaukee region’s public and private colleges and universities, we are writing to request your support for a modification to the current City of Milwaukee public health order as it relates to institutions of higher education.

The level of cooperation and partnership between our institutions and the City of Milwaukee during this pandemic has been unprecedented. Our institutions have been working closely with the Milwaukee Health Department, City Attorney’s Office, Milwaukee Police Department, and other city agencies to keep our institutions operational, both for on-line and essential instruction and services, and to do our part to continue to contribute to the local economy. We have prioritized the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff while managing to effectively conclude the spring semester; our respective campus recovery teams have been working diligently and carefully on the re-entry of students, faculty, staff, and visitors to our campuses for the fall 2020 semester. We intend to resume in-person instruction beginning in August for the 2020-2021 academic year, providing a combination of in-person, hybrid, and on-line instruction, ensuring that CDC and other governmental guidelines are followed. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Establishing the processes and resources necessary to plan for resumption of on-campus instruction while mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in our campus and broader communities.
- Mitigating the effects of the global pandemic on our campus communities through testing and tracing as well as training in, and utilization of appropriate PPE and social distancing measures.
- Returning our campus facilities to a condition that allows for students, faculty, and staff to safely return to campus, with a focus on social distancing practices, de-densification and the frequent cleaning and disinfection of campus buildings, including limiting the number of individuals per classroom, increasing the distance from head-to-head for students living in residence halls, and modifying dining hall experiences to include less in-person seating and increasing grab and go food options.
- Requiring the use of a cloth face covering when in shared or public areas of campus and in the presence of others, with certain exceptions as determined by our campuses.
- Communicating clear direction and expectations to faculty, staff, and students for returning to campus.
• Modifying academic calendars to reduce a possible increase in spread via out-of-state travel.

• Reserving isolation and quarantine space on campus for institutions with congregate living situations.

• Reasonable accommodations for student, faculty, and staff that are unable to return to campus due to health conditions or other risk factors.

While we were able to pivot to remote learning for Spring and Summer sessions, the demand for in-person instruction remains high among our students and their families who are eager to return to Milwaukee this Fall. According to a May 2020 Carnegie Dartlet survey of over 2,800 high school seniors, thirty-three percent indicated they are likely to defer or cancel an admission offer that is conditional on attending an all-online college in the fall. In this same survey, ninety-five percent said that they would honor commitments made to colleges that plan to reopen in the fall with social distancing measures in place. Allowing campuses of higher education to provide in-person instruction in the Fall will help support the long-term needs of Milwaukee’s future workforce as we know many of our students remain in the Milwaukee area after graduation. The economic impact of not allowing for in-person instruction will be devastating to our campuses and to our city. Financially, each campus sustained losses in the millions of dollars. If we are unable to resume in-person instruction, the losses will be in the tens of millions. Without in-person instruction, the jobs that were part of furloughs when campuses abruptly shifted to remote learning may not resume. The neighborhood businesses that rely on campus populations are struggling and will continue to experience greater economic hardships if in-person instruction is not permitted.

Another challenge we face relative to in-person instruction involves international students. On July 6, 2020, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced that it is rescinding some COVID-19 emergency accommodations that have previously been made for international students studying in the United States. International students studying in the United States will now be required to leave the United States and will be barred from entering on an F-1 visa if their colleges and universities transition to online-only learning for the Fall 2020 semester. Further, even if institutions of higher education adopt “hybrid” models (a portion of the classes delivered online and in-person), if the international students’ course load or program is entirely online, they will have to depart from the United States. Several of our institutions have international graduate and undergraduate students that would be adversely affected by this decision if in-person instruction is unable to resume. Many of these international students are studying in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math disciplines critical to the economy of the United States and are assisting to advance important research projects.

We would appreciate the opportunity to work with you to consider language for institutions of higher education as provided below and that this language be effective as of August 1, 2020 to give our institutions maximum time to implement and communicate with our students, faculty, and
staff. Each campus would be happy to review its Recovery Plans with the Milwaukee Health Department and other city agencies as needed. Please note this language is substantially similar to language issued by the Dane County Health Department Order #7 and Order #8:

Continuing education and higher education institutions. Continuing education and higher education institutions may determine policies and practices for safe operations. However, these institutions may not open congregate living situations including dormitories without strict policies and safety measures in place to mitigate the risk of COVID-19. These institutions must maintain physical distancing to the greatest extent possible. When in shared or public areas of campus and in the presence of others, a cloth face covering must be worn with certain exceptions as determined by the institutions.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership as we work together to move Milwaukee forward.

Sincerely,

Mark Mone
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Vicki Martin
Milwaukee Area Technical College

Michael Lovell
Marquette University

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