



# MEMO

**TO:** Hawk Family and Friends

**FROM:** President Anderson

**Date:** August 14, 2020

Greetings Hawk Family and Friends!

Well, we have successfully completed week one of the Fall 20 semester! A year that will surely make history – for more than one reason!

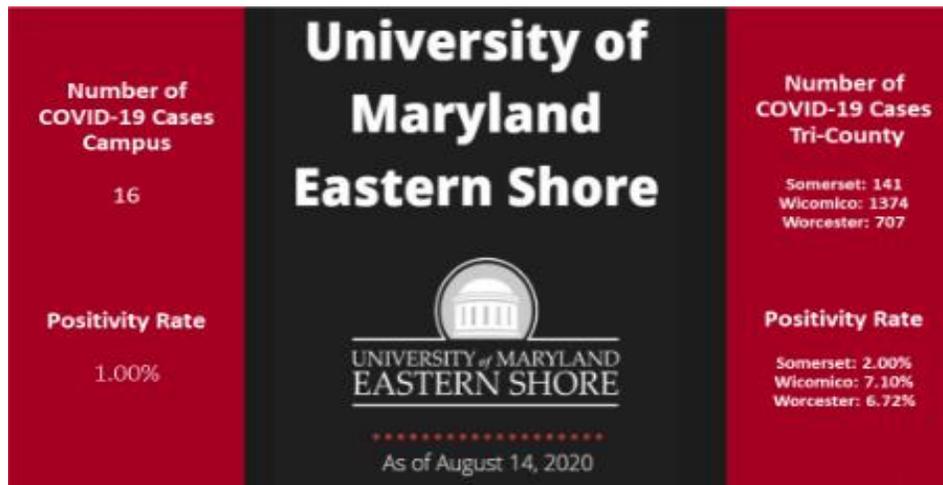
We have had to make some major changes to our beloved campus and our students are rolling with the punches. In the last week, not only did they start classes in new and innovative ways, they took their COVID tests, reminded friends to stay physically distant and wear masks and some of our athletes will continue to practice but may not compete in the near future.

How are we doing all of this you ask? Very carefully.

**Test. Test. Test.**

Per the mandate of the USM, UMES embarked on testing residential students the weekend before classes started. Testing continued through Thursday until every member of the campus community could be tested. This initial test is a baseline to show us where we are starting. We are in discussions regarding surveillance testing, which will likely begin in the next couple weeks.

Our baseline testing results as compared to our tri-county area is:



We ask those coming onto campus from outside to complete a symptom screening each morning and show proof that they have completed it upon entry to campus.

### **De-densify the Campus.**

In order for us to be together but remain apart, we are limiting housing to one student per bedroom. Double-occupancy rooms are a thing of the past, for now. About a third of our students chose to stay at home and continue their learning and all of our classes are hybrid or hyflex, meaning some students can take class online while others will be in class.

Those who are here have committed to following the rules of mask wearing and physical distancing. Enhanced cleaning procedures are in place with disinfectant wipes nearby and gallons of hand sanitizer. We're doing everything we can to keep each other safe.

### **Prepare to Pivot.**

We know we need to be ready in the event of an outbreak to pivot to fully distance learning and we are prepared to do so. We have invested in additional technology to create an engaging learning environment. We are communicating regularly with our Somerset County Health Department and if we have to pivot, we will make that decision with their input.

### **Why?**

Some have asked me, "Why are you doing all of this extra work when it's just easier to put classes online?"

It's a valid question, and one I had to think about most of the summer during the Return to Campus Workgroup meetings and thrice-weekly meetings with the Chancellor and our USM sister institutions.

My answer is fairly simple: **For our students.**

Before all of the students returned, the SGA leadership of 20 students were on campus for their retreat. I had the opportunity to have dinner with them and they shared stories with me – some of their own and some from their friends. Some of them don't have good wi-fi at home. Some of them are tasked with caring for younger siblings or older relatives when at home. Some of them can't focus and study well when at home.

They WANT to be on campus. THIS is their SAFE PLACE and their HOME away from home.

When I hear these stories, I want to do everything I can to give them the best chance at success. So, I am willing to put in the hard work necessary to make this happen.

**They DESERVE it. We owe it to them to TRY.**

Remember that the combination of all of these safety precautions is just one part of the university's overall mitigation plan. It will take all of us working together to maintain a safe and productive environment.

So, thank you for your emails and notes of encouragement and understanding and thanks to the UMES TEAM for pushing us forward.

With my mask on and with Hawk Pride,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Leidi M. Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.