

**From:** [Summers, Greg](#)  
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Colleagues,

We continue to experience relative stability on the [COVID](#) front on campus. Unfortunately, as you know, our communities and our state are experiencing [a dramatic surge](#) in the spread of the virus, and the rising number of cases is straining hospital capacities. We're closely monitoring the situation here in central Wisconsin and paying attention to the guidance of county and state health officials. At present, [disease activity is very high in our region](#) and nearing critical levels. Regardless of how well our protocols are working in our classrooms and buildings, we must be prepared to help prevent and hopefully reverse the spread of this disease in our communities. There is no change in the university's status as of today, but obviously we all need to monitor the situation as it evolves.

In other non-pandemic news, you've already seen that our first-year class grew this fall by 25%, helping to stabilize our overall enrollment. Some additional good news is that among these entering students, more than 15% came from underrepresented populations, which is a welcome increase in the diversity of our campus community. Beyond recruitment, I'm also happy to report that our first-to-second year retention rate climbed this fall to 79%. Hard times in the broader economy usually lead to stronger retention rates for universities, so perhaps that's a factor here. However, faculty and staff members from across campus have also been engaged in a variety of retention-oriented initiatives during the past year, and it's wonderful to see their efforts benefit our students.

Finally, as we enter the closing weeks of our national election season, I want to call your attention to our [SGA's Get-Out-the-Vote](#) initiatives. If you'd like to promote these efforts with your students, you can find a PowerPoint slide with details [here](#). On election day, Tuesday, November 3, I hope that everyone extends some extra flexibility to students and colleagues to ensure that we all have time enough to vote, if we haven't already done so.

Have a good weekend, and stay safe.

Greg

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Greg Summers

Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs | [UW-Stevens Point](#)

202D Old Main | 2100 Main Street | Stevens Point, WI 54481

Phone: (715) 346-4686 | [gsummers@uwsp.edu](mailto:gsummers@uwsp.edu)



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