April 14, 2020

Dear Upward Bound 9th – 11th grade students and their parents/guardians:

The current COVID-19 pandemic has certainly overturned our daily lives and thrust the UW-Stevens Point Upward Bound Program into a new realm of delivering services to its students. We currently are running several web events for students to participate in to earn a stipend as well as conducting daily live stream check-in meetings for students to attend with the Upward Bound staff (see our website for more details). UW-Stevens Point has cancelled all on campus events through June 30th and the Upward Bound staff is currently working from home. While we were hoping for more clarity on when on campus events could resume, there is still much uncertainty over how the COVID-19 situation will play itself out. As a result, the Upward Bound Program had to make the very difficult decision to move its normal residential summer program to an online 2020 summer session for current 9th – 11th graders (students who will be in grades 10 – 12 this fall).

The Upward Bound staff greatly enjoys interacting with its students face to face and would like nothing more than to conduct an on-campus summer session. However, Upward Bound and UW-Stevens Point needs to put the health and well-being of its students first. So, what will a 2020 online summer session look like? Honestly, like everyone else in education these days, we are officially off-roading and figuring things out as we go. Here is what I can tell you for certain at this time:

- Upward Bound summer session classes will take place online June 15 – July 17, 2020. We realize students may already be burned out from online learning. We are currently working with our instructors to ensure we set realistic academic expectations and do not require students to sit at a computer all day.
- Summer classes will run from 9:00 AM through 1:30 PM Monday – Thursday and from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM on Friday. Upward Bound will be delivering classes synchronously (teacher and students log on at the same time) using the learning management system (LMS) Canvas. Canvas is the LMS that all UW System schools use. It will be good practice for when students head off to college. Students participating in the online summer session will be provided with instructions on how to use Canvas.
- Evening online activities and tutoring sessions will be conducted with Tutor-Advisors (many who were RAs last summer) Sunday through Thursday.
- Upward Bound will provide students with the school supplies needed for online learning. We’re working on a plan to deliver school supplies to students prior to the first day of classes. More information about the delivery of school supplies will be forthcoming.
- I am working with all our schools’ counselors and principals to allow students to utilize their school issued technology over the summer months. I am also working with these individuals to ensure students who participate in the online summer session will be able to earn an elective credit at their high school.
- Upward Bound can provide technology assistance to students who may need it in order to participate in the online summer program. Again, stay tuned for further details.
- Students who participate in the online summer session will receive a stipend of at least $120. The stipend will be sent via check to online summer session participants in late July/early August. The Summer Stipend Policy will be provided to online summer session students at a later date.
Once travel is allowed again, we may be able to take some fieldtrips. All students who participate in the online summer program will be eligible to go on an extended out of state honors trip –hopefully mid-August. The honors trip will be rescheduled for late winter or spring 2021 should travel not be allowed by late summer.

Upward Bound staff will be conducting virtual Summer Session Orientation sessions in late May for current 9th – 11th grade students who register to participate in the 2020 online summer session and their parents/guardians. Information on these virtual orientation sessions will be sent via email in the coming weeks.

Online forms are on the Upward Bound website (www.uwsp.edu/upbound) for students to complete under Upcoming Events to let us know if they plan to participate in online classes OR will opt out of online summer session. Current Upward Bound students are required to complete either the online summer session registration form OR the online summer session opt out form. So that we can best plan for the 2020 online summer session, we ask that students please complete one of the online forms no later than May 1, 2020.

The Upward Bound staff genuinely cares for all its students’ and families’ well-being. The COVID-19 situation has been a dizzying experience but the Upward Bound staff is a mere email away. Please email us at UpwardBound@uwsp.edu about any questions or concerns. Feel free to vent away or share a laugh with us. Stay in touch with us because we all need to keep things as near normal as possible. The Upward Bound staff will keep you all updated via email, our website and through social media with information on the 2020 online summer session as it becomes available. Please stay well!

Sincerely,

Judy Young, Director
UW-Stevens Point Upward Bound Program