

September 8, 2020

MSU Faculty and Staff:

We hope you had a good Labor Day Weekend and had a chance to rest and get caught up on things you may have needed to accomplish. A few updates:

Library Hours:

Our Library will begin staying open in the evenings until 8 p.m. Monday – Friday, as well as on Saturday's from 1–8 p.m.

State Budget Reductions:

Unfortunately, the State Budget Office relayed to us last week their need to reduce our state funding appropriation by 8% in this current budget year. This equates to about \$3.05 +/- million dollars. As we move through the next week or two we will be working to identify these dollars for return to the State. This reduction of 8% is applicable to this current budget year, and will cause us a little pain in identifying the funds in an already tight environment. We are anticipating some of the reductions to be recurring for next year, but do not have an exact percentage at this point.

We believe, at this point in time and barring no additional cuts, that we can accomplish this budget reduction without furloughing or laying off current full-time employees. However, to accomplish a reduction of this size it will require us to look deeper at items such as current year travel, holding vacancies longer, strategic reductions, and a variety of other one-time options for many areas.

Employee Health Insurance:

Please remember that open enrollment begins tomorrow, September 9, and runs through Friday, October 9. During this time you can re-evaluate your benefit needs and make changes to current benefit selections. Changes to coverage or plans made during open enrollment will be effective January 1 through December 31, 2021. Open enrollment is being extended slightly more than usual to enable Human Resources to provide assistance either virtually or in person with proper social distancing.

Later today, our Department of Human Resources will be sending out more information on the live stream benefits information session which is scheduled for September 10 at 9 a.m., along with a link to the 2021 Benefits Guide.

For some good news, and in order to help our employees, there will be no rate increase for employee health insurance premiums from Calendar Year 2020 to 2021. The University will be using one-time funds to absorb for 2021 what would have been a 6% rate increase to employee health insurance premiums.

Flu Shot:

As we approach this fall, we would ask that you consider getting a flu shot. These can be obtained from your health provider, a walk-in clinic, some pharmacies, and we are also exploring options to provide them on campus as well. This will be important to consider as we get closer to the usual cold, cough, and flu season – particularly when Co-19 is mixed into the environment.

Employee WebEx Livestream:

In order to communicate with our campus in a variety of ways, we will be hosting another employee WebEx live stream on Tuesday, September 15 at 3 p.m. We will use this time to update employees on fall enrollment, retention, finances, spring semester, etc. A link to join the live stream will be sent out the day before the event.

Virtual Meetings, Etc.:

As we move forward from Labor Day, please help our campus stay vigilant in continuing to wear a mask and distance. We need to keep up our good work. Also, we have continued to meeting with and communicate to student groups, clubs, organizations, etc. that they should remain virtual this semester in their activities. We would also ask that as you work through this semester assisting any group, club, organization, program, show, concert, career fair, event, etc. that you help steer them virtual as well. This is not ideal, but is needed to keep our number of cases of Co-19 and risk as low as possible.

Special Thanks:

A special thanks goes to Max Ammons (Dean of Students) and Goldie Williams (Director of the Counseling and Health Services Clinic) for their work during this time. Both of them have gone ‘above and beyond’ in their efforts around Co-19.

Thanks for your continued focus as we push to November 24.

Jay Morgan
President