

One year ago today I had to make the extremely difficult decision to close the SHSST campus, send employees home, and suspend spring semester courses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I was convinced then that it would only be for two weeks. But it quickly became evident that the outbreak was far worse than anyone here knew. Even so, we quickly pivoted and were able to resume courses through online delivery modes after a week of lockdown. Also, employees were able to work remotely from home and then begin rotating on and off campus following a schedule that assured everyone of safe practices to protect ourselves from infection.

We developed a well-thought out and well-grounded COVID-19 Response Plan we have continued to follow until now, albeit with needed tweaking. I am grateful to those who have been primarily responsible for the development and updating of the plan and its protocols: Chris Lambert, Monica Misy, Chris McAtee, Brittany Hager-McNeely, Megan Nelson, and Pat Russell.

Now as we are approaching the end of the spring semester 2021, it looks like there is light ahead signaling the waning of the pandemic. Nonetheless, we still need to follow safety and health protocols to assure everyone's wellbeing until the pandemic is well under control. I'm very grateful that our faculty, students, and staff have made it through so far, more or less intact. Only a very few were infected but no one went into the hospital or died: Thanks be to God.

Given that COVID-19 testing is more readily available, that vaccines are becoming more readily available also, that the infection rate in Wisconsin has fallen tremendously, and that the CDC has updated its recommendations regarding gatherings, travel, and safety protocols, the members of the President's Council and I feel we may be able to move into Phase 4 of our plan beginning on Monday, 12 April, a week after Easter Break. More on this will be forthcoming next week.

Thank you for your flexibility, cooperation, dedication, and commitment to the wellbeing of all those associated with SHSST. We will be forever changed by this experience, especially if we put it all into God's hands and permit him to show us the way forward. We already have been graced by his courage, wisdom, and strength.

In the heart of Christ,
Fr. Raúl