



**Wisconsin Conference of the  
American Association of University Professors**

**Statement on Fall 2020 Reopenings**

**August 25, 2020**

The fall semester is upon us as the coronavirus pandemic continues. University reopenings in other states offer a window into what we can expect in Wisconsin as students return to campus: clusters of outbreaks and a swift move to online instruction. Yet many Wisconsin universities continue to advance policies that encourage or even force instructors to teach in person in the classroom, putting students, instructors, and other campus employees at risk.

We join calls from colleagues across the state—including at [Marquette University](#) and [UW-Madison](#)—to rescind policies that force students and instructors into classroom situations that may not be safe and that may endanger the health of other campus employees. We call on university administrations to recognize and honor the core AAUP principle that the primary responsibility for methods of instruction, including mode of delivery, lies with faculty. And we urge administrations to heed the AAUP’s advice that “[Decisions on how to reopen campuses safely should be driven by guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state departments of health.](#)” Notably, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services stated last week that the state’s testing capacity [is below the ideal level needed](#) for school and university reopenings.

Universities have an obligation protect the health and safety of their students and employees. In addition, universities must be mindful of their role in preserving the public health of the communities in which they are located. Campus-based outbreaks endanger those on campus and those beyond its borders. Instead of [policing student gatherings](#) as potential virus-generating clusters, universities across our state need proactive planning by coordinated and democratic governance to better ensure student, faculty, and staff well-being at this unprecedented time.

Wisconsin university administrators have the benefit of the early example of other states’ reopening experiences. They will have all the less of an excuse should preventable outbreaks occur on Wisconsin campuses.