

The University of Iowa and Iowa State University students and staff unite to oppose in-person learning

Andy Thompson
15 September 2020

Iowa students and faculty at the University of Iowa and Iowa State University have united together to oppose the reckless reopening plans of the universities. The students and faculty are planning a sickout today after over 900 students at the University of Iowa participated in a similar action September 2.

The demands of those involved in the protest are to end all in-person classes and have all learning be done online until the pandemic is under control. The protest is being organized by two groups, UIowa Sickout at the University of Iowa and Iowa Student Action at Iowa State.

Representatives from Iowa Student Action told *Iowa State Daily*, "The Board of Regents and [University President] Wendy Wintersteen made the decision to open, prioritizing their own profit and not the health and safety of the community." The students continued: "They knew it would be unsafe to reopen but did so anyway. They care more about our tuition money and residence hall money than our lives."

Both schools are seeing massive outbreaks of COVID-19. In Story County, where Iowa State is located, 3,119 individuals have tested positive for COVID-19. Iowa has the country's worst outbreak of the pandemic per capita. As of this writing, there have been 74,767 confirmed cases in the state. Its positivity rate for those who have been tested is close to 10 percent, and six counties have a positivity rate of over 15 percent. So far 1,218 Iowans have died from COVID-19.

The University of Iowa has reported a staggering 1,804 total cases. The University has done everything in its power to downplay the severity of the outbreak.

University of Iowa President Bruce Harreld has made

relatively few remarks on the situation. Instead, he has been participating in an effort with other presidents from Big Ten football schools to create a plan to resume the football season as early as October 17. In August, when the Big Ten presidents voted to postpone the season, Harreld was one of the three votes in the minority to insist on playing during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, the University of Iowa students are reporting difficulties getting tested for the virus and have been provided few resources to handle the outbreak. One student, Will Luebke, told *The Daily Iowan* that even after he had come into contact with another student who had tested positive for COVID-19 he could not get tested since he was not yet showing any symptoms.

Luebke remarked, "[The Student Health nurses] number was super busy and it took five different calls to talk to somebody. They told me that they wouldn't test me, and I had to stay in my room for 10 days and if I had symptoms to call them back,"

On the contrary, the University has spared no expense when it comes to testing their football players and staff. From September 7-13, the University of Iowa athletics department reported that they performed 667 COVID-19 tests with 24 positive cases. Virtually everyone involved with bringing the football program back online has received testing while students are left with nowhere to turn.

At Iowa State University, the fall football season has begun playing before a mostly empty stadium, though several hundred, mostly family members of players, were allowed to be in attendance. Iowa State had originally planned to have 25,000 fans in attendance but announced they would close attendance after

mounting pressure from the community.

Yesterday, Iowa's three major public universities, the University of Iowa, University of Northern Iowa, and Iowa State University all announced that they would modify their spring semesters and cancel spring breaks due to the outbreaks.

The action of the universities throughout the state elucidates the pressing political issues involved in this struggle and underscores the need for the strike to expand and most importantly to adopt a clear political perspective.

The students and faculty involved in this struggle have taken an important step in linking up their struggles across campuses. It is only in a united fight by teachers, students, and workers more broadly that the policy of in-person learning can be halted and lives saved.

This struggle is part of a growing movement around the country of students, teachers, and workers who are opposed to the reckless reopening of schools and campuses. While the Trump administration has spearheaded this campaign, the Democratic Party is equally complicit.

What is required to carry this struggle forward is the independent mobilization of the working class against the entire policy of the ruling class to send children back to school, students back to campuses, and workers back to plants and factories. The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and its youth and student movement the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) urge faculty, staff, and students in Iowa to solidarize themselves with the state's thousands of meatpackers who also staged walkouts to protest pandemic conditions.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality in the US is holding a national online meeting Thursday, at 8 PM EDT to organize students against the reckless reopening of schools. We urge students and youth to register for the event today.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact