



What it takes to close school due to weather

Elle Gerst

Driving to UMD on a frigid winter day in Duluth, you can see huddles of students at bus stops or even walking to campus.

There are times when students feel unsafe in the extreme cold or dangerous driving conditions, but can't afford to miss class when school is in session.

So what does it take to get school cancelled?

"In essence it comes down to access and safety," said Lynne Williams, Director of UMD's Marketing and Public Relations. "Can we provide a safe and comfortable learning environment? And can we ensure that the campus community can safely access campus?"

The Chancellor ultimately makes the decision, but the process of shutting down school for a day is not as simple as one might think.

"The process involves input from multiple people like leadership, UMD Police Department, facilities and grounds crew people," Williams said. "We also look at what is happening on campus that day. Do we have a large event or other events on campus . . . to have special considerations for? There are a lot of factors at play."

According to Williams, there is no specific formula for weather conditions to require school cancellation.

"We watch what is happening in the community," Williams said. "For example, what are other schools doing, what does the Duluth Police Department say about travel, are the DTA buses still running, and so on."

Though students may feel at times that school remains open despite dangerously low temperatures, heavy precipitation, or icy roads, Williams urges students to exercise personal safety.

"Each person needs to always be accountable for their personal safety and do what they feel is best," Williams advised. "We do live in northern Minnesota and with that, we need to be prepared for a variety of weather complications."

Photo by Sharon Mollerus. No changes were made.



Elle Gerst

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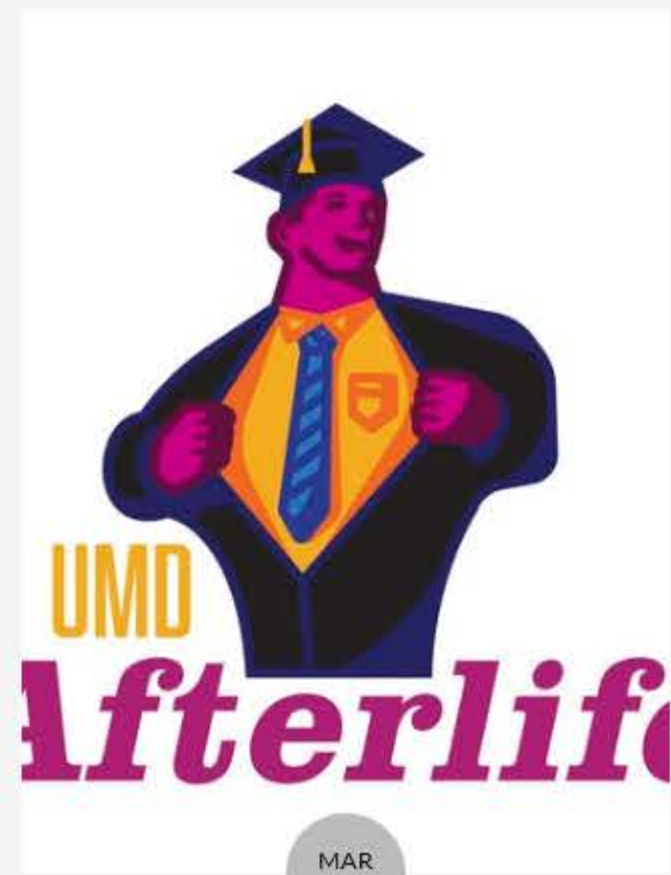
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