



UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

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Subj: Reopening the University – Message 5

Dear Notre Dame Community Members:

We write to provide an update on several key health protocols at the University. The plan outlined below will supplement the extensive health and safety modifications (required face coverings, physical distancing, etc.) described in previous communications and on the Notre Dame coronavirus [website](#). In developing these plans, we are focused on making the best possible decisions to enhance the health and safety of Notre Dame and South Bend community members.

Pre-matriculation Testing

Before returning for the fall semester (pre-matriculation), students who reside outside of St. Joseph County, as well as St. Joseph County residents who will live in Notre Dame residence halls, will undergo testing. We are working with LabCorp, a leading national provider of tests and lab services, to develop a program to distribute tests to students in late July and for University Health Services to receive the results from LabCorp before students return to campus. Any student who tests positive will be asked to refrain from returning to campus until they are medically cleared to do so.

COVID-19 Response Unit

We are creating and staffing a COVID-19 Response Unit (CRU), comprised of medically-trained and administrative personnel. The CRU will monitor daily health checks, oversee our onsite testing center, perform contact tracing for positive COVID-19 cases, manage quarantine and isolation spaces for students in partnership with student affairs, and support a hotline phone number to respond to COVID-19 inquiries. The current plan is for this CRU to launch on July 13 and to be fully operational by July 20.

Daily Health Checks

We will require all faculty, staff, and students to complete a daily health check. We have signed a contract for a software system to support these daily health checks. Health information will only be conveyed to the COVID-19 Response Unit, the Wellness Center, or University Health Services. Depending on symptoms reported, community members will be referred for a telehealth consultation and may be asked to be tested for COVID-19 and/or to refrain from coming to campus or attending class.

Onsite Testing Center

We will have an on-site testing center located at Gate D of Notre Dame Stadium for those with symptoms of COVID-19 or for those who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive. Testing at the on-site center will be free to all currently enrolled Notre Dame students, all faculty teaching or conducting research on campus during the fall semester, and all staff who are working on campus. The campus testing site will supplement testing available to all members of the campus community through their physicians' offices and other locations in the county.

Surveillance Testing

Surveillance testing refers to the notion of randomly screening community members to assess baseline rates of infection or prior exposure to the infection, including determining rates of asymptomatic infection. We are working with relevant medical experts and our own faculty (Alex Perkins, Jenna Coalson, and Bernard Nahlen) to identify an approach to surveillance testing that would make sense for the campus. Many different approaches exist, and testing technology continues to evolve. Determining the approach Notre Dame will take for surveillance will require some further exploration, investigation, and modeling. We are grateful for the outstanding work being done by our colleagues and for the generous contribution of expert advice by so many local and national medical specialists.

Face Coverings

Current policy requires everyone to wear face coverings while on the Notre Dame campus except when alone in one's office or private vehicle. Many have inquired about using face shields rather than masks. Face shields have been shown to [protect the wearer from others](#), but there is no evidence of their ability to protect others from the wearer. New technology has recently been developed that allows face shields to be assessed, and we have engaged Mark McCreedy and David Leighton in the Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering to conduct such an assessment. They have begun their work already, and we look forward to seeing results in the near future.

Contact Tracing

The COVID-19 Response Team will oversee our contact tracing for any member of the Notre Dame community who tests positive for COVID-19. This means that we will methodically identify those on campus who have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for the virus, and refer those people for testing. Contact tracers will respect and adhere to best practices for patient confidentiality. Our CRU, per public health practice, will coordinate with the county health department, but will not draw on resources from the health department. We have already signed a contract for the support software we will be using. Some have raised privacy concerns, and we want to be clear that we will not be using any Bluetooth-enabled electronic notification systems as part of our contact tracing efforts. Our contact tracing software will connect directly with our daily health check system and the testing center, allowing for seamless follow up on those exhibiting symptoms and testing positive for COVID-19.

We realize the importance of these plans to the campus community and appreciate the many people who have provided input over the course of the past few months. The input and feedback has certainly strengthened our plans. We will continue to assess our plans as understanding of the virus evolves. We continue to consult with our dedicated campus physicians, faculty experts, and other medical specialists, including infectious disease experts from the Cleveland Clinic. This plan has been endorsed by Dr. Mark Fox, the Deputy Health Director charged with managing COVID-19 for St. Joseph County. This is all very hard work, and we are very grateful for all each of you are doing.

In Notre Dame,

Thomas G. Burish, Provost
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