



UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

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Subj: Reopening the University – Message 14

Dear Colleagues,

This has been an extremely challenging week – for our students, our faculty, and our staff members. It has also been a week of heroic efforts by many people across our University community and a reminder of what a formidable foe the COVID-19 virus is. Thank you for your extraordinary commitment to Notre Dame and each other.

In recent days, the University has applied additional resources and efforts to continue and further support the good work of our testing center and contact tracing team, as well as expanding protocols to care for our students in isolation and quarantine. At the same time, students living on- and off-campus appear to be responding to the message of caution Father John sent in his video address Tuesday evening. We are hopeful these factors working in combination with our continued diligence and adherence to health and safety protocols will help contain the virus and allow us to resume in-person instruction.

A few updates:

Graduate Classes

Graduate and professional school classes will resume in-person instruction starting Monday, subject to the discretion of their individual instructors and programs.

Positive Cases

Those of you paying attention to the [COVID-19 dashboard](#) the past few days have seen the increase in the total number of positive cases. Our positivity rate, while still higher than we would like, declined from ~22 percent early in the week to ~9 percent today. We are watching this number carefully, both as an indicator for whether we are doing enough testing and how our efforts to contain the virus are working. While this decline in the positivity rate is good, it should be interpreted very cautiously.

Quarantine and Isolation Space

Several of you have asked recently whether Notre Dame has enough capacity to meet the need for isolation and quarantine space, with specific requests for the total number of beds we have and how many of them are filled. We began setting aside and acquiring designated space for quarantine and isolation earlier this summer. We also added hundreds of quarantine and isolation spaces to our inventory over the last month, and we have the ability to add more if necessary. We are not currently at risk of running out of quarantine and isolation space. Should that ever become the case, it will of course shape our decisions about resuming or continuing in-person education.

Surveillance Testing

Today we began randomly selecting students to be tested as part of our next round of active surveillance testing. You might remember that pre-matriculation testing was our first form of surveillance testing, along with some of our athletic teams. This vital program will complement the diagnostic testing that has been ongoing since July 27. Moving forward, we plan to add faculty and staff members to the surveillance testing pool.

Stadium Test Site Capacity

The University Testing Center has administered more than 1,500 tests in the past four days. The heroic work of those at the testing site has enabled us to better ensure the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff.

Concluding Thoughts

In preparing for the fall semester, we discussed the importance of making goals worthy of your team's commitment. Our goal is to support the whole formation of our students – mind, body, and spirit. You are not only providing them with the opportunity to learn academic material; you are providing them with the opportunity to grow and struggle and support each other together. We offer our special thanks to the rectors and assistant rectors, dining hall staff, the extended team running the testing center, our contact tracing team, the quarantine and isolation team, the daily care and concern team, and the hundreds of people who have jumped in from other areas to support the effort to beat back the COVID-19 surge.

Letters of support and appreciation from students and their parents have (literally) filled our inboxes since Tuesday. The overwhelming sentiment of these messages is one of gratitude for the work all of you are doing to make in-person education possible. Your commitment to our collective goal is truly amazing. We could not be more proud of your efforts. There is no place we would rather be than right here working alongside you.

- Wear your mask
- Practice physical distancing
- Wash your hands regularly
- Complete your daily health check

And be kind to each other and generous with yourself – and remember that being kind to our community includes holding each other accountable.

Yours in Notre Dame,

Marie Lynn Miranda, Provost
Shannon Cullinan, Executive Vice President