



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

300 Main Building, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-5602
tel (574) 631-3802 *fax* (574) 631-4782 *email* provost@nd.edu

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Subj: Reopening the University – Message 27

Dear Colleagues:

The win against Clemson was exciting and marked a great day for Notre Dame football. We offer our congratulations to the players and coaching staff for all the hard work that made the victory yesterday possible.

Unfortunately, we were disappointed to learn about several large off-campus gatherings that occurred Friday and Saturday evenings. We write to you now to provide background on our preparations and testing leading up to the game, and decisions we have made subsequently to adjust our approach for the rest of the semester.

Leading up to the Game

You likely noticed an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases documented on the daily dashboard last week. We attribute this increase primarily to three things: 1) increased case rates in the county, making community transmission more likely; 2) relaxed adherence to public health protocols by our students; and 3) increased surveillance testing. In fact, 61% of the positive cases last week resulted from asymptomatic individuals detected through surveillance testing (114 of the 186 total cases). All positive cases and their close contacts were placed in isolation or quarantine (I/Q).

You may have also noticed an increase in the number of surveillance tests reported on the dashboard. With our increased capacity for surveillance testing, we thought it critically important to test all undergraduates in advance of the Clemson game. Excluding those who previously tested positive in the past 90 days, those with accommodations to study remotely, and athletes (who are tested regularly through a different surveillance system mandated by the conference), we arrived at a base dataset of 7,173 undergraduate students. We excluded those already in I/Q and identified the rest for surveillance testing, informing students that failure to show up for surveillance testing would result in deactivation of their football tickets for the game. Compliance with surveillance testing was 98%, and those who did not show up for testing did, in fact, have their football tickets deactivated.

Going Forward

We have been in close consultation with Dr. Mark Fox, Deputy Health Director for St. Joseph County, regarding how best to adjust our testing regimen to reduce the risk of transmission. We will continue to conduct surveillance testing Monday-Wednesday this week with a focus on high-contact employees. Our plans for exit testing include the following:

- Excluding those who previously tested positive in the past 90 days and those with accommodations to study remotely, all students will be scheduled for exit testing starting this Thursday, November 12.
- Because we are now even more concerned about the potential for contagion in our students' home communities, the University will place a registration hold on the record of any student who fails to appear for surveillance testing when asked to do so. A registration hold means that students are unable to matriculate or register for classes next semester or receive a transcript.
- We will not allow students to leave the South Bend area until they have received the results of their exit test. Should we discover that a student has left the area, we will place a registration hold on their record.
- There will be zero tolerance for any gatherings that do not comport with our health and safety guidelines, on or off campus. Those found responsible for hosting such gatherings will face severe sanctions.

We are aware of rumors circulating that we will simply send all students home; this is not true. Sending students home without first conducting exit testing would be irresponsible. Furthermore, transitioning to online instruction for the final four days of the semester and for final exams would be unnecessarily disruptive for students and faculty, especially since there is no evidence of classroom virus transmission.

What Can You Do to Help?

Earlier this evening, Father Jenkins sent students a message making them aware of our plans going forward. We ask that you reinforce his message with students and encourage them to comply with all public health protocols, especially in their choices regarding social gatherings. Because we are seeing increased cases among first year students, we ask those of you teaching our first years to talk frankly with them about the importance of adhering to the protocols. This is a moment for us to teach and our students to learn about the responsibilities that accompany being part of a community.

Please remember:

- Wear your mask
- Practice physical distancing
- Wash your hands regularly
- Complete your daily health check
- Show up when selected for surveillance testing

Yours in Notre Dame,

Marie Lynn Miranda, Provost
Shannon Cullinan, Executive Vice President