



University of Idaho

TO: University of Idaho Faculty, Staff and Students
FROM: Scott Green, President
DATE: Sept. 14, 2020
SUBJECT: Our COVID-19 Efforts Are Paying Off – Keep It Up

Now that we are beginning our fourth week of classes, I want to reflect on what we have accomplished together and outline the hard work that needs to continue for us to remain in person until Thanksgiving break.

Testing for Those Who Traveled Over Labor Day Weekend

Gritman Medical Center has been a valuable partner, and I can't express enough gratitude to their leadership and staff. Their nurses swabbed each person who took part in the university's in-house testing program and will swab many more before Thanksgiving break. They will be at the Student Recreation Center (SRC) Tuesday and Wednesday, Sept. 15-16 to swab anyone who traveled over Labor Day weekend. For those who traveled, some may have inadvertently and unknowingly brought the virus back to campus. We know it is not convenient, but I ask that you do the right thing and [sign up for testing this week](#) if you traveled over the long weekend. It is important we all continue to participate in testing to contain the spread of this highly contagious virus.

What We've Accomplished

Since we started our official COVID-19 testing Aug. 6, the university has completed over 8,500 tests, and the overall percent of positives remains at 1.11%. I am grateful for the efforts our students, staff and faculty have made to get us off to

a good start. We all want to remain open and are willing to make sacrifices to support our world-class faculty who provide students transformational educational experiences. I also appreciate the modeling experts at our own Institute for Modeling Collaboration and Innovation (IMCI). They predicted a 1.06% positivity rate for our initial screening, and the actual number was 1.08%. The IMCI team was pivotal in our preliminary screening and planning, and we continue to use their expertise as we transition to surveillance testing.

Not only is this testing helpful to the University of Idaho, but also for our community. Because we are the only institution in the state with a lab with these kind of testing capabilities, we will be able to provide additional COVID-19 testing for our region during the winter flu season.

Since the beginning of testing the university has housed a total of 31 students in our on-campus isolation area and currently have only four students residing there. We have audited and confirmed 100% testing compliance from students living in Housing and Residence Life. In addition, the entries on the daily lists of students ineligible to attend class are dwindling as we settle into the semester. Faculty members recently helped the university move over 250 students from the list who still identified as needing to be tested, confirming with us that the students have made alternative arrangements, including participating in their classes remotely.

More than 1,000 people per day have gone through thermal scanners at the Wallace Complex (The HUB) and the ISUB Food Court, where people take their masks off to eat. Fever is a symptom of COVID-19 and is also a symptom of many other flus and head colds, so the thermal scanners are not just preventing symptomatic COVID-19 carriers from entering, but those suffering from other contagious illnesses. To date, only one person had to be turned away after failing the secondary testing. This is an encouraging indicator of health and a positive sign that people who are not feeling well are being responsible

and staying away from the food courts. Again, our employees and students are doing the right thing.

Our custodial and building staff have been diligent in making sure the Healthy Vandals sanitizer and disinfectant are refilled and readily available across campus, including in the over 80 conference and event spaces converted into classrooms. We have tripled the number of Zoom-capable classrooms and increased the frequency of cleanings in heavy-use spaces. PPE has been distributed to employees and students and the university has ordered face mask extenders as requested by faculty. If you would like a face mask extender, please email covid19questions@uidaho.edu. Extra face coverings are available to students free of charge thanks to generous donations by U of I alumni and can be picked up at the Dean of Students Office in the ISUB.

Compliance with the Healthy Vandal Pledge has been strong. From Aug. 16 until now, there have only been eight calls to Campus Security from concerned faculty and staff about lack of compliance regarding COVID-19 protocols – the majority of which were complaints about face coverings not being worn outdoors. In addition, Moscow Police told us they have observed very high face covering compliance on campus. Thank you to all employees and students for doing your part.

Surveillance Testing

Several efforts are underway to continue COVID-19 monitoring. The university started surveillance testing earlier than planned due to the outbreak in neighboring Whitman County and will continue this testing until Thanksgiving break. Surveillance testing means sampling a subset of our U of I community each week to understand and respond to any potential spread of COVID-19 on the Moscow campus. The goal of continued testing throughout the semester is to identify students and employees who tested negative when arriving on campus but who have since contracted COVID-19 and may be asymptomatic. Identifying and isolating positive cases helps

keep our campus healthy while ensuring our colleagues and classmates get the dedicated support and care they need.

Zero positive cases resulted from subsequent testing of 168 student-athletes this past week. This illustrates the dedication of Athletic Director Terry Gawlik, Director of Athletic Training Services Chris Walsh, coaches and student-athletes. Athletics staff members have worked hard over the summer and into the fall to transition student-athletes back to campus in a responsible manner and provide the environment needed for practice, team activities and learning. The university learned a lot from their efforts.

U of I employees living in Whitman County were recently invited to test again due to the exceptionally high infection rate there. Despite the difficulty of controlling the outbreak in Whitman County, the number of positive cases identified was low. This is yet another example of the commitment of our employees to engage in safety protocols.

Researchers in the College of Engineering are also conducting wastewater sampling of eight locations on campus for early detection of COVID-19. Wastewater testing is one tool to help monitor on-campus residence halls and apartments, as well as Greek Row. This sampling prompted follow-up testing of students in two residence halls and identified six new positive cases.

Next Steps

I am very appreciative of all the hard work to get us here, including all the preparation at centers and Extension offices across the state. But the work is not done. There are 10 more weeks until Thanksgiving break and we can't let our guard down. One super-spreader event could undo this success. Please continue to wear your face covering, social distance, wash your hands and participate in ongoing surveillance testing if asked. If you show symptoms, please call the Vandal Health Clinic at 208-885-6693. If you don't need to leave Moscow, I encourage you to stay here until Thanksgiving. Also, be mindful

that Pullman and WSU are having a severe COVID-19 outbreak. If possible, limit your time in Whitman County until they have contained their spread of the virus.

Again, if you traveled over Labor Day weekend, please get tested this week. We are all in this together and what we have accomplished thus far is testimony to the Brave and Bold Vandal Family culture that has been our hallmark for generations. For more information on the U of I COVID-19 response [visit the COVID-19 website](#) or email questions to covid19questions@uidaho.edu.

Keep Calm and Vandal On.

Scott Green
President

president@uidaho.edu
uidaho.edu/president

Copyright © 2020 University of Idaho, All rights reserved.

Not the email you wanted to get? Customize what emails you receive from the University of Idaho by **updating preferences for <<Email Address>>**. You can also **opt <<Email Address>> out** of all University of Idaho email communications.

You may wish to **forward this email to a friend**.