



University of Idaho

TO: University of Idaho Students, Faculty and Staff

FROM: Scott Green, President
Torrey Lawrence, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President

DATE: Oct. 5, 2020

SUBJECT: All Students to Be Tested, Broad Spread Off Campus Not Found in Weekly Results

Summary

Being together on campus, even with the COVID-19 restrictions, is valuable for us all. The experience we gain from interaction is irreplaceable. But that experience is at risk if the spread of COVID-19 becomes too great. The results from this past week show continued spread in our Greek community; smaller, but noticeable increases in our residence halls; and few cases in off-campus students and employees.

Details

Testing of 1,389 people resulted in an 8.35% positivity rate for the week of Sept. 25 to Oct. 2 (which is reported Friday to Friday). This positivity rate includes some targeted testing from the previous week that was processed after the Friday cutoff. From the data provided, the modeling team believes that the university community as a whole might be testing at 5.3%. As predicted by Public Health, the broader surveillance showed a significant decrease from the nearly 12% we reported from our focused testing the week of Sept. 19-25. It also shows the impact of our additional focus on the Greek community, which was tested at higher percentages than other populations.

The past several weeks we focused on potential hot spots and limited our general surveillance testing. The result was quicker

isolation of positive cases. It did not, however, give us a good sense of the campuswide infection rate. That broader testing this past week confirmed higher infection levels were limited primarily to Greek row. The overall active cases are 1.0-1.5% of our Moscow-based community. The only population with higher than a 5% positivity rate is our on-campus Greek students, who account for approximately 10% of our community. We currently have 14 fraternities and sororities in mandatory or voluntary quarantine (with Public Health releasing two of those chapters from quarantine later today) and 59 students from Greek housing and on-campus residences in isolation. Conversely, fewer than five employees, who aren't also students, have tested positive through our testing program since August. Importantly, Public Health has not traced any of these positive results back to a classroom.

Classes and Testing

Instructors may continue to choose how to deliver their classes this week. Given that many students on Greek row are in quarantine and that we will be testing all students over the following days, we recognize that managing classes during this period will be a challenge and thank you for your patience. Some instructors prefer to teach in person and some disciplines require it, so we want to provide that option where it makes sense.

Some will ask why we are not immediately going fully online. First, the infection is primarily isolated in the Greek system, and Greek leadership is working with us to protect the campus by going into quarantine. Second, we know that going fully online does not, in itself, restrict the spread of COVID-19 — and may, in fact, make it worse. As mentioned earlier, Public Health has confirmed that no transmission has been traced to the classroom and that our protocols for in-class delivery are still valid and working. Having said that, if our plan to again test all students is not as effective as we expect and strains our healthcare system, we will not hesitate to move to online instruction.

We will work over the next two weeks to test all students. Most will receive their results within 24-48 hours but given the increased testing volume, some will take longer. If you test late Thursday, you may not receive your results until Monday morning. Students, we also ask for your patience with our testing protocols. Details on how to sign up for a test will come from covid19questions@uidaho.edu. If you have been tested since Sept. 28, previously tested positive, or are not taking any in-person classes, you will not be required to retest. Testing will be at the Student Recreation Center. If you are symptomatic, please email the same address to set up a test at Gritman's Martin Wellness Center. Transportation to the center is available through [Parking and Transportation](#). After Oct. 16, ineligibility lists will be populated with any students who have not been tested, and those students will not be permitted to attend any classes in person.

Faculty and staff will continue to be invited to participate in random testing after the student testing is completed. If you receive an email invitation, please participate. The more test results we have, the better we can understand spread of the virus.

Going Forward

We saw a spike in positive cases across the country and here on campus after Labor Day. There is little doubt that traveling outside of Moscow puts us all at risk and could lead to making yourself or those around you sick. We again ask you to please stay in Moscow until Thanksgiving Break.

A big thank you for continuing to participate in testing. I know it isn't comfortable, but it is necessary. Also know that testing negative does not mean you are immune. Testing combined with following the Healthy Vandal Pledge, remaining vigilant especially in communal living communities and following city and state COVID-19 protocols will keep our campus healthy and on track to reach our goal — a full semester together as Vandals.

Keep Calm and Vandal On.

Scott Green

President

president@uidaho.edu

uidaho.edu/president

Torrey Lawrence

Interim Provost and Executive Vice President

provost@uidaho.edu

uidaho.edu/provost

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