

Dear Quincy University community:

Please read this entire email, which contains new information about on-campus and off-campus dining and shopping for members of the Quincy University community, along with other new and important information. This is the sixty-sixth update on Quincy University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A few weeks ago, Quincy University knew of almost no active COVID-19 infections on campus and had only a handful of students in quarantine. As most of you know, our circumstances have changed. We have had an increase in students showing symptoms of COVID-19 and testing positive for the virus. At the same time, our first two rounds of large-scale surveillance testing have discovered a meaningful number of asymptomatic QU students who have COVID-19 infections. While QU students, faculty, and staff been very successful in following our procedures for contact tracing and quarantining, we need to do more to reduce our number of infections.

To understand our current situation, here are some of the most relevant data points at present for Quincy University and COVID-19:

- Eighty-seven positive COVID-19 viral tests have been reported this semester for QU students after those students arrived at the university.
- Forty-four of those 87 students currently have active COVID-19 infections and are in quarantine.
- Forty-three of those 87 students have completed their quarantine periods and are not active cases.
- 116 students are currently in quarantine, including all active positive cases. Several students have been released from quarantine since the last update, which explains why the number of quarantined students has declined since Monday's update.
- Seventy-eight rooms on campus currently are unoccupied and available for quarantine, a decrease in room availability since the last update.
- All the new positive tests received since Monday's update came from Monday's surveillance tests, with 18 positive COVID-19 tests out of about 140 total tests.

As will likely be the case on any given day, we are awaiting student test results for COVID-19. Today, we are waiting for the results of three COVID-19 tests. Also, the number of students in quarantine changes almost daily. For example, 15 students are scheduled for the conclusion of their quarantine on Sunday, September 27.

In reviewing the contact tracing and other data from our first six weeks of Fall 2020 courses, we have learned that students likely are not getting infected in their classes, labs, or other instructional activities. Instead, all evidence suggests that students are becoming infected in their residential or social activities, whether they live on campus or off campus. In addition, there is no one residence hall, campus activity, student organization, or athletic team that is the primary cause of our current infections. Instead, it appears that students are getting infected through interactions with roommates, romantic partners, and friends. We at QU generally have not had large, irresponsible gatherings, and our students, faculty, and staff have been successful overall in following our rules for masking, distancing, and hand hygiene.

Simply put, some students this semester have had too much contact with too many people they thought would remain uninfected. The result has been that infections have spread slowly but steadily from one individual and one student group to another. Ordinary activities like watching television or playing a board game with other people can seem harmless, but they can spread the virus to multiple people, often when the necessary precautions were not taken. In one recent case, we discovered a single student was eventually responsible for spreading the virus to a dozen others (and resulting in many more students going to quarantine), as the first student gave the virus to a few students, those students gave the virus to one or a few others, and so on. In each case a single decision to stand too close, for too long, and without a mask likely led to the infection, with those interactions taking place in residential and social settings.

Fortunately, the events of the past ten days have led many students to use their masks even more carefully and to ensure more consistent enforcement of physical distancing in residential and social settings. Importantly, many students appear to have recently begun reducing the number of people with whom they have close contact and where masks are not used. These are very significant steps that will help reduce future COVID-19 infections and allow many students to avoid the need for quarantining in the future. Again, students, faculty, and staff have been generally good at following the guidelines for masking, distancing, and hand hygiene, but they appear to be getting even better at doing so. Well done, Hawks.

Ultimately, though, we need to do even more as a community to reduce COVID-19 infection rates. Doing so will create a better academic experience for our students and make our community safer. In addition, over the past week the seven-day positivity rate in Adams County has risen and is now 8.9%. A seven-day county positivity rate of 8% or more may be sufficient to trigger a warning from the State of Illinois. As responsible residents of the county, we should do our part at QU to reduce the county's seven-day positivity rate.

Today we are announcing new measures to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus at Quincy University and in our region. All the new measures listed below will take effect beginning Friday, September 25, and will be effective until we reduce positivity rates and COVID-19 caseloads at Quincy University.

- Effective Friday, September 25, dine-in services will no longer be provided in the Quincy University Cafeteria and the Student Center. Our future success in reducing COVID-19 infection rates may allow us to reopen seating for food service later this semester.
- We now ask our residential students to eat their meals either outdoors or in their residence hall rooms or suites. Beginning Friday, September 25, indoor meals on campus should only be taken alone or with roommates.
- Beginning Friday, September 25, we request that all students avoid all indoor restaurants and bars, whether in Quincy, Illinois, or anywhere else, until Friday, October 9. Take-out and delivery restaurant orders continue to be acceptable, as is outdoor dining alone or with a roommate. In addition, we encourage all faculty and staff who work on campus to honor this request about avoiding indoor restaurant and bar use until Friday, October 9, to the fullest extent possible. This request to avoid indoor dining at area restaurants and bars is not intended to prevent students from holding restaurant and bar jobs while adhering to masking and other safety guidelines, as those jobs often are necessary to meet the financial needs of our students.
- For the remainder of the academic term, all students, along with faculty and staff, are encouraged to reduce the total number of their shopping trips to purchase personal and grocery items and to avoid any unnecessary shopping or other trips away from campus, even for those who live off-campus. We recognize that some shopping trips are needful and unavoidable. Students, faculty, and staff should adhere to on-campus guidelines for masking, distancing, and hand hygiene when away from campus, to the fullest extent possible.
- Students should eliminate socializing indoors in favor of outdoor events for small groups of people, to the fullest extent possible, while still following all directions for masking and physical distancing. Students who want to hold any outdoor event, for any reason, involving more than ten students should contact Dr. Tracy to discuss whether the event can be held safely. Indoor events may be organized in certain cases by university faculty and staff, in consultation with supervisors and, as needed, with Dr. Tracy. We realize that cooler fall weather will make outdoor events and activities less attractive over time.

We recognize that these restrictions will be inconvenient for many members of our community. Because we now have evidence of how COVID-19 is being transmitted at QU, we have adopted these new measures in order to have the maximum possible effect on the prevention of future COVID-19 infections.

As noted in the past, we continue to rely on the recommendations of the CDC, the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Adams County Health Department, and the NCAA Sports Science Institute. We appreciate in particular the partnership of the Adams County Health Department, which has worked closely with us for many months.

Be safe, and God bless.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian McGee, President

Dr. Christine Tracy, Vice President for Student Development

P.S. President McGee is aware that many students have requested another waffle extravaganza. Game on, Hawks. We will schedule another waffle event during this academic year. If you want to suggest new toppings, please do so!