

September 5, 2020

The Honorable Athena Salman
House Democratic Whip
Arizona House of Representatives
1700 West Washington, Suite H
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear Representative Salman:

I appreciate your questions and desire to learn more about ASU's response to COVID-19. I am glad to provide additional details, and also clarify a few misconceptions.

We have been managing positive cases of COVID-19 on and off campus since January. We operate today with the mindset that the virus isn't going anywhere; it is here to stay. Informed by that, our belief is that we must find a way to operate the university in a manner that accounts for the ongoing presence of the virus and allows students to move forward with their education and to fill the jobs our economy demands.

Before addressing your questions, I wanted to share a few other items.

ASU has an ambitious testing program that allows us to test thousands of students and employees from across the university each week. We test anyone who is symptomatic. Unlike many places, we also test those who do not present any symptoms, including required random testing each week to a statistically-significant subset of our ASU community. And our saliva-based COVID-19 test, developed here in our Biodesign Institute labs, is available free of charge to any student or employee who needs or wants a test.

We have more than 240 researchers involved in COVID-19 related topics at ASU. We are making our saliva-based test available at ongoing public events for thousands all across the state. Employees at ASU have adjusted on the fly and there are dedicated teams within the university working every day, literally, on how to manage this pandemic.

While it is both unfortunate and understandable that images of a few large parties grab the media and social media attention, that has been the exception and is not what our epidemiologists, who are busy investigating the virus transmission both on and off campus, say is causing an increase in cases. It is not a matter of a single large event or particular location; rather it is the natural tendency of college students to congregate. We are not seeing egregious violations. More likely, it is students relaxing standards in everyday interactions, hanging out in a dorm room with some friends with their masks off. That's all the virus needs in order to spread.

We are constantly reviewing the results of our testing program and using the numbers to inform us and evaluate what we do, and help us adjust. Just like the state, we're all trying to learn and navigate and fight through this historic ongoing global pandemic.

Now to address your questions:

What happens when a student tests positive:

When ASU becomes aware of a student who tests positive – regardless of whether they live on or off campus, the university will work directly with that student to communicate isolation requirements, offer medical advice, and ask for information on recent activities and contacts on campus so that the university can notify individuals at ASU that they may have been exposed and are required to quarantine.

The university also will work with the student to address any medical, housing, food or academic needs and concerns.

We check-in with the students who tested positive on a daily basis.

Students who test through ASU will receive their test results through the ASU Health Portal. Results are automatically uploaded from the Biodesign laboratory. We encourage students who test outside of ASU to share positive results with ASU Health Services or the Dean of Students Office.

When ASU becomes aware of a student who tests positive, either because ASU Health Services tested the student or the student reports to us that they are positive, the following occurs:

- ASU Health Services contacts the student and talks to them about their test results, asks about ongoing symptoms (if any), offers medical advice, and tells them to self-isolate.
- ASU Health Services also asks the student for any people at ASU they have been around for more than 10 minutes and closer than 6 feet without face coverings. Everyone who meets that criteria is called a “high risk exposure.”
- ASU Health Services asks the student who tested positive for permission to give their name to the Dean of Students office so that the DOS can assign an “engager” to check in on the student while they are in isolation and problem solve any issues such as housing, food or academic concerns. The DOS can help arrange for food delivery, alternative housing if the person does not have a place to live by themselves, and help ensure they have what they need to be successful in their coursework. This is a critical step. Because student health information is protected under law, the student must consent to Health Services sharing their name and diagnosis with the Dean of Students office so that the university can follow-up and provide direct support. If a student does not consent, their name will not be transferred to the Dean of Students office and they will not receive direct support from the university.
- ASU Health Services contacts all of the high risk exposures at ASU and tells them they have been exposed and tells them that they should quarantine for 14

days, and if they develop any symptoms to make a telehealth appointment with ASU Health Services.

- Students are released from isolation/quarantine consistent with CDC guidelines.

Exposure management:

- As mentioned above, when a student tests positive, ASU Health Services asks the student for any people at ASU they have been around for more than 10 minutes and closer than 6 feet – following CDC guidelines. Everyone who meets that criteria is considered a high-risk exposure.
- ASU Health Services contacts all of the high-risk exposures at ASU and tells them they have been exposed and should quarantine for 14 days, and if they develop any symptoms to make a telehealth appointment with ASU Health Services.
- Students, faculty and staff are released from isolation consistent with CDC guidelines.
- The university team regularly follows up with them to make sure they have what they need and to answer any questions.
- We have dozens of people involved in the exposure management efforts.
- Contact tracing also happens through the state or county, but is not a university function. The county knows what we are doing, appreciates the speed at which we are doing it, and also knows it does not replace their efforts.
- HIPAA and FERPA (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) prevents the university – including faculty members - from releasing medical information about a student to other students.

Moving to lower density residence halls:

As numbers of known positive cases at ASU increase, we are taking additional steps to fight further spread. We have about 5,000 spaces available in our residence halls. We will be dispersing students out across all of our residence halls, moving some students to different rooms or different residence halls to reduce the density in the dorms.

Students who have questions about this can contact us at deanofstudents@asu.edu.

Questions about roommates and suitemates:

There was some confusion, understandably, because all of this is new, given the ongoing pandemic. There are a variety of factors considered in evaluating each case – and they are viewed individually. If a student who tests positive has a roommate or suitemates, we will determine whether they are ‘presumptive positive’ based on their level of exposure and will advise on testing and isolation guidelines. In some cases, roommates and suitemates will remain in their existing spaces. Positive cases can stay in isolation together.

Meals when in isolation:

Students who are in isolation receive three meals a day. Students not currently on a meal plan can purchase food service including delivery through the university. I personally reviewed the meals that were delivered yesterday. Students received a balanced meal with an entrée, vegetables, a salad, some cookies and a bottled water.

In addition, students can augment their meal delivery with orders from Starbucks and other providers through the Starship app that delivers food by robots.

We know that these are challenging and stressful times and we want to do everything we can to make isolation as comfortable as possible. If there is a problem that needs to be addressed, we want to know about it. Students can get assistance, information or register a concern at deanofstudents@asu.edu or (480) 965-6547.

Daily Screenings:

Each morning, students and employees are prompted to submit a daily health check before starting their day. The HealthCheck platform was designed by Los Angeles-based Safe Health Systems, a startup that advanced as part of the [Mayo Clinic and ASU MedTech Accelerator](#). It is designed to advise users on appropriate steps to take if they are exhibiting COVID-like symptoms, including staying home, contacting a healthcare provider and potentially getting a COVID-19 test. Users respond to a brief set of questions and get an immediate recommendation on whether to proceed with learning and working as usual.

Exposure management is also a critical part of this app. Students and employees can opt in to share COVID-19 test results and campus locations. While not required to share this information with the app, the more people who opt in, the healthier we can keep our community.

Students and employees should monitor their temperature each day they will be on campus. If their temperature is 100.4 degrees or higher, they should stay home and seek health advice.

The daily health check applies to students on campus and off campus and employees working on and off campus. Students and employees who do not comply lose access to ASU systems and must go through a password reset. Individuals who repeatedly do not comply could face additional disciplinary measures.

We do not have screeners at all our buildings due to the size of our four campuses, but we do have attendants at our residence hall front desks. We are relying on technology that has been implemented using our ASU health check mobile app and website healthcheck.asu.edu, and a call-in number for individuals who do not have access to technology to pre-screen individuals who may have COVID-like symptoms before coming to campus. This has helped augment the need to have physical screeners at every building.

Additionally, we have implemented tighter access controls for our building to limit public access and requiring appointments if visitors need to come to our campuses.

What metric would force a move to fully online modality?

We have not established a single metric or data point. It is a combination of factors and data points that would signal adjustments to university protocols. We will make such adjustments as needed and if we need to pivot, we will be ready. We spent the summer

investing in enhanced technology for more than 800 classrooms so that students on Zoom can interact seamlessly with their instructors and classmates, and we also spent countless hours in training to prepare instructors for our ASU Sync. It is important to note that the spread of the virus at this point is not being driven by activities inside the classroom.

First Amendment rights and specifically the BAC:

You mentioned in your letter that “the social gathering policies were enforced in an extreme fashion against the Black African Coalition. Black student leaders were threatened with suspension for their support and plans to peacefully protest systemic racism and inequity.”

That is simply not the case. The impression was created when a communication was sent out from the President’s office reiterating the requirement for wearing face coverings, physical distancing and limitations on group social gatherings. The policy on gatherings does not include protests and freedom of expression. Our requirement is that public health guidelines are followed. These expectations were communicated to the BAC and they acknowledged that our protocols did not prohibit them from gathering.

The gathering was peaceful. We heard these students and understand their concerns. ASU has always been committed to diversity and inclusion, but there is always more we can do. We must continue to evolve in this way. This week we unveiled new initiatives to further support Black students, faculty and staff at ASU. I attach a copy of my September 2 communication to the ASU community on this topic.

These are challenging times and the need for open and clear communication is paramount. There are those who are taking advantage of these circumstances to deliberately spread false information and to inflame. As is the case everywhere, COVID management systems are new and may require adjustments as we go, but we will continue to share information as clearly as possible and to quell rumors. I welcome the opportunity to meet with you, virtually or physically-distanced in-person, to discuss any other questions you might have. As you said, we’re all in this together.

Sincerely,



Michael M. Crow
President