

To: President's Cabinet
From: Denise M. Trauth
Subject: President's Cabinet Meeting
November 30, 2020

Impact of COVID-19 (#770)

Guest Dr. Emilio Carranco provided an update on the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, COVID-19 metrics are trending down following the post-Halloween spike. In Texas, week-to-week comparisons (week of November 16, 2020, versus week of November 23, 2020) revealed a slight decrease in cases per day from 8,407 to 8,234 cases per day and in the positivity rate from 11.3 to 11.1 percent. In Williamson county, new cases decreased from 100 to 48 cases per day, while the positivity rate increased from 5.7 to 6.7 percent. In Travis county, new cases decreased from 261 to 247 cases per day and the positivity rate remained at 6.5 percent. In Hays county, new cases decreased from 51 to 20 cases per day. However, at the time of the Cabinet meeting, Dr. Carranco had yet to receive the most up-to-date positivity rate. For the week of November 16, 2020, it was 7.7 percent. Dr. Carranco added that case counts and positivity rates would probably change because cases had not been fully reported and counted due to the shortened work week associated with the Thanksgiving holiday.

During the week of November 23, 2020, 1,135 tests were conducted on the San Marcos Campus, with 25 returning positive (2.2 positivity rate, which increased from 2.1 percent the previous week).

As of November 30, 2020, there are 105 active cases at Texas State. The number of students housed in isolation is three and in quarantine is one.

Dr. Carranco provided a COVID-19 update for other universities. During the week of November 23, 2020, at The University of Texas at Austin, 2,288 tests were conducted with 10 returning positive for a positivity rate of 0.4 percent. At Texas A&M University, 5,718 tests were conducted with 295 returning positive for a positivity rate of 5.2 percent.

Dr. Carranco stated that a positivity rate of five percent or below indicates low transmission (i.e., transmission is being effectively managed), while a positivity rate of 10 percent or above indicates high transmission.

Additional improvements to the Dashboard will include the addition of students placed in isolation and quarantine on a weekly basis, a statement indicating test results are returned within 48 hours, and links to surrounding counties (e.g., Travis county) dashboards.

Pandemic/Post Pandemic Work Groups (#771)

Dr. Lloyd and guest Dr. Emilio Carranco discussed updated recommendations from the Health, Wellness, and Safety Work Group. The primary recommendations included:

- To add “get COVID-19 tested” and “report to Bobcat Trace” to Texas State’s 10 Health and Safety Measures, thereby emphasizing their importance to the university’s prevention plan,
- To develop a testing strategy for spring,
- To develop a communication plan focused on students’ return to the campuses for the spring 2021 semester, and
- To focus on students’ mental health, identify students who are in distress, struggling with isolation, and missing personal interactions associated with in-person instruction and services, and implement strategies to increase awareness.

Cabinet members approved the work group’s recommendations.

Cabinet members agreed to reviewing and adjusting, as necessary, the current testing strategy to increase the number of students, faculty, and staff who are tested for COVID-19 during the first few weeks of the spring 2021 semester.

Curative Inc. is scheduled to return to the San Marcos and Round Rock Campuses on January 11, 2020. However, prioritization of testing beginning on January 4, 2020, may be a good strategy to increase the number of people who get tested prior to the start of the spring 2021 semester. Dr. Carranco will ask Curative Inc. to return on January 4, 2020. Priority testing of staff may begin the week of January 4, 2020, and of faculty may begin the week of January 11, 2020. Students will be expected to test prior to returning to the campuses and during the first week of their arrival.

Dr. Trauth asked Dr. Lloyd to convene a small work group, consisting of Mr. Algoe, Dr. Carranco, Dr. Cavitt, Ms. Sandy Pantlik, and Dr. Debbie Thorne, to finalize a testing strategy for faculty, staff, and students who are enrolled in face-to-face classes and/or use the university facilities for any reason. The testing strategy should include targeted testing, such as targeting those who live in residence halls. As an example, flyers could be placed on all residence hall doors strongly encouraging/expecting residences to get tested upon their return.

The work group also recommended to request that students self-quarantine prior to arriving to the campuses in spring 2021. Since that is an unreasonable request for students who work, Cabinet members suggested requesting that students significantly limit their social activities prior to returning. However, at this time, the length of time to restrict these activities cannot be determined, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is in the process of changing quarantine requirements, likely reducing them from 14 to seven or 10 days.

The work group will prepare a brief, one-page summary of a testing strategy for spring 2021 and expectations of students returning in spring 2021. A statement with this information will be approved and distributed by email to all students, faculty, and staff by December 7, 2020. This information will also be used to inform emails that will be sent by Provost Bourgeois to faculty and by Dr. Cavitt to students. Dr. Cavitt will send out two messages -- one at the end of the fall 2020 semester and then another prior to students returning for the start of the spring 2021 semester.

Before the start of the spring 2021 semester, President Trauth will send out an email to faculty and staff, highlighting the successes, lessons learned, and additional initiatives. The email will address the safety of classrooms, as there has been no evidence of transmission in classrooms, and the importance of reporting to Bobcat Trace.

Dr. Carranco provided an update on COVID-19 vaccine approval and roll-out. The federal government is expected to finalize priority distribution of vaccines on December 1, 2020, then states will develop their own priority groups. The Food and Drug Administration is set to review vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna on December 10, 2020. The turnaround will likely be quick, and vaccines may be made available as early as the end of December 2020. The vaccines will be administered in phases -- first to health care providers, then to nursing home residences and vulnerable populations, and followed by other target groups, such as educators and college students.

The mass vaccination work group is working on a plan to store the vaccines. The Pfizer vaccine requires ultracold storage, the Moderna vaccine requires storage in a freezer, and the AstraZeneca vaccine and others require storage in a refrigerator. To qualify as a vaccine provider, special temperature gauges/monitors will need to be installed on the storage units. Once installed, registration will be completed. Once the registration is completed, the work group will identify a location for mass vaccination and finalize the process.

Dr. Carranco discussed that current guidance suggests that during phase II, vaccinations will be available to faculty, staff, and students. At this time, it is unknown if the vaccinations the university receives will be made available to spouses and dependents. The decision will be made at the State level.

Cabinet members engaged in a discussion about whether the Student Health Center should bill insurance companies for administration of the vaccine. The vaccine itself is provided free of charge by the federal government. There are major costs associated with the administration of 25,000 vaccinations, including personnel, facility, and equipment costs. It is standard practice for medical practices to charge for administration of immunizations. This charge is typically covered by health insurance plans. Both the federal and state government are allowing for this charge. However, the goal is to administer the vaccine with no out-of-pocket cost and not to turn anyone away for vaccination due to the vaccine administration charge. This item will be discussed at a future Cabinet meeting.

Employee Recognition Efforts

Mr. Alge discussed ways to recognize employees. Cabinet members approved giving all staff employees eight hours of compensatory time to be used at any time over the next 12 months in appreciation of the hard work during the pandemic. Cabinet members also approved giving a one time monetary award of \$250 to custodial staff. The vast majority of custodial staff make less than \$30,000. While other employees make less than \$30,000, those employees do not have to

clean offices, residence hall rooms, and other spaces occupied by people who have tested positive for COVID-19.

President's Update (#556)

President Trauth announced that the Board of Regents meeting was rescheduled for December 7, 2020, and it will be virtual instead of in-person.

Significant Issues (#01)

Provost Bourgeois announced that the theme for the 2021-22 Common Experience will be "Compassion."

Provost Bourgeois lauded the reach/popularity of Dr. Chittenden's article titled "Why Republicans and others concerned about the economy have reason to celebrate Biden in the White House" that was recently published in The Conversation.

Provost Bourgeois provided an update on external funding received by The Graduate College, extolling the work of external funding coordinators, Dr. Andrea Hilkovitz and Dr. Brian Smith. From June 2019 thru May 2020, The Graduate College received 31 awards for approximately \$850,000 in funding to support graduate students.

Provost Bourgeois announced that the Faculty Research and Productivity Network is meeting on December 4, 2020, to discuss opportunities for collaboration on research projects focused on underserved and/or marginalized populations.

Mr. Algoe discussed the make-up of the State of Texas's COVID-19 Vaccine Implementation Committee. Among the 17-member committee, four are representatives from higher education institutions.

Dr. Cavitt shared that she is working with Dr. Cynthia Hernandez, who will be joining Texas State as Vice President for Student Affairs, to ensure a smooth transition.

Dr. Cavitt provided an update on new strategies that will be discussed with Housing and Residential Life and Student Conduct to increase compliance related to drug violations in residence halls. Additional initiatives to support students recovering from addictions were also discussed.

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Posted to web at <http://cabinet.president.txstate.edu/> on December 14, 2020.