

To: President's Cabinet
From: Denise M. Trauth
Subject: President's Cabinet Meeting
December 7, 2020

Impact of COVID-19 (#770)

Guest Chief Medical Officer Dr. Emilio Carranco provided an update on the COVID-19 pandemic, the strategies in play to mitigate the spread, including recent changes to the CDC's guidance on quarantine and international travel.

Overall and as expected, COVID-19 metrics are trending up following the Thanksgiving holiday. During the Thanksgiving holiday week (i.e., week of November 23, 2020), many health departments were closed for a portion of the week and incomplete testing data was recorded; thus, Dr. Carranco compared data from the week of November 30, 2020, to data from the week of November 16, 2020. In Texas, two-week comparisons revealed an increase in the average new cases per day from 8,407 to 10,789 cases per day, peaking at 15,162 cases on December 1, 2020, and in the positivity rate from 11.3 to 14.2 percent.

In Williamson county, average new cases per day increased from 100 to 177 cases per day, peaking at 256 new cases on November 28, 2020, and the positivity rate increased from 5.7 to 11.3 percent.

In Hays county, average new cases per day increased from 51 to 82 cases per day, peaking at 281 new cases on November 30, 2020, and the positivity rate increased from 7.7 to 9.4 percent.

During the week of November 30, 2020, 1,308 tests were conducted on students, faculty, and staff on the San Marcos Campus, with 43 returning positive for a positivity rate of 3.3 percent.

As of December 4, 2020, there were 125 active cases at Texas State. The number of students housed in isolation is 4 and in quarantine is seven. Dr. Carranco noted that the Department of Housing and Residential Life will allow students to complete their quarantine/isolation periods after the week of finals.

Dr. Carranco provided a COVID-19 update for other universities. During the week of November 30, 2020, at The University of Texas at Austin, 4,019 tests were conducted with 48 returning positive for a positivity rate of 1.2 percent. At Texas A&M University, 3,943 tests were conducted with 330 returning positive for a positivity rate of 7.7 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. Dr. Carranco reviewed the Hays county data by city, reporting that the highest number of cases are in areas bordering Travis county. The nearly 10 percent

positivity rate in Hays county does not appear to be driven by Texas State college students living in San Marcos.

Dr. Carranco reviewed the new guidance recently published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- The 14-day quarantine may be reduced from 14 to 10 days. As an additional option, a seven-day quarantine may be permitted with either a negative PCR or antigen test during the last 48 hours of quarantine. Ultimately, however, the local health authority has the authority to determine the quarantine strategy based on local conditions. As such, the Hays County Local Health Department has determined that the 14-day quarantine will remain in effect for Hays County residents identified as close contacts. Since Texas State conducts a large number of tests on students, faculty, and staff, and has access to student-athletes' testing information, Hays County Epidemiologist Eric Schneider approved Texas State to require a 10-day quarantine for the general student population and a seven-day quarantine with a negative test result for student-athletes. Cabinet members agreed to this change. Aligning the 10-day quarantine period for close contacts with the 10-day isolation period for positive cases should reduce confusion.
- International travelers should test one to three days prior to departure. Post-arrival, travelers should self-monitor and quarantine for seven days and test day three, four, or five of the quarantine period. With a negative test result, the quarantine period may end after seven days, but travelers should continue to self-monitor for an additional seven days.

COVID-19 testing is an important tool for mitigating transmission, especially in institutions of higher education. Curative, Inc. will be on the Texas State campuses during the spring 2021 semester. At some point, they will transition to insurance billing, thereby preserving state funds for those who do not have insurance. Curative, Inc. has tentatively agreed to add a second testing location on the San Marcos Campus for at least two weeks. Dr. Carranco will look into whether the second location can operate through the entire semester.

Dr. Carranco discussed targeted testing in the residence halls upon the return of residence hall students in the spring. Cabinet members agreed that students living in residence halls should be expected to test upon return. Even with two locations on the San Marcos Campus, however, Curative, Inc. would not be able to test all residents over a few-day period of time. Thus, Antigen testing performed by trained Texas State staff and students could be a way to increase testing capacity when the residents return. As part of an institution's testing strategy, the CDC has endorsed the use of PCR and/or Antigen testing. PCR testing is expensive and sensitive, often producing positive test results long after persons are infectious. Antigen tests are less expensive and less sensitive and, thus, may be a suitable alternative when testing people who are asymptomatic. Initial screening of asymptomatic individuals could be performed with an Antigen test, and a positive Antigen test result could then be verified with a PCR test. President Trauth asked Dr. Cavitt to convene a work group, consisting of Mr. Algoe, Dr. Carranco, Dr. Rodney Rohde, Mr. Kyle Estes, and Mr. Whitten Smart, to develop a targeted testing plan for students living in residence halls in the spring.

Dr. Carranco led a discussion on the use of a smell test to determine if someone may have COVID-19. Studies indicate that 60 to 80 percent of people with COVID-19 tend to lose their sense of smell. Cabinet agreed to ramp up efforts to educate the community on this particular symptom by launching a campaign, such as “stop, smell, and be well,” strategically placing flyers throughout the campuses, and moving the symptom into the top portion of the daily self-assessment, next to fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

Provost Bourgeois discussed the key changes recommended by the Continuity of Education Work Group from summer 2020. Cabinet members approved the recommendations, and they can be found in the Roadmap on the [Continuity of Education Work Group](#) webpage.

SACSCOC (#37)

Provost Bourgeois and guest Dr. Beth Wuest updated Cabinet members on Texas State University's Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee Report. President Trauth lauded Dr. Wuest's considerable efforts in preparing the materials for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges reaffirmation. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee report indicated that almost all areas were found in compliance; only two standards will require more clarification, documentation, or action to demonstrate compliance. The On-Site Review will take place virtually in March 2021. At that time, the Quality Enhancement Plan will be presented.

Inclusion and Diversity (#747)

Dr. Silva discussed the process for seeking the Seal of Excelencia. President Trauth initiated the process by having a conversation with President Sarita Brown, joining Presidents for Latino Student Success, and joining E-Action. Dr. Silva reviewed the makeup of the Seal of Excelencia Work Group, which includes faculty and staff closely involved in Latino/a student success initiatives.

President's Update (#556)

President Trauth announced that the Board of Regents meeting will be held on December 7, 2020.

President Trauth announced that a future Cabinet meeting will be exclusively devoted to refocusing efforts and resources on successfully achieving Research I university status.

Significant Issues (#01)

Provost Bourgeois discussed the upcoming in-person and virtual commencement ceremonies.

DMT:ta

Posted to web at <http://cabinet.president.txstate.edu/> on December 18, 2020.