

To: President's Cabinet
From: Denise M. Trauth
Subject: President's Cabinet Meeting
September 8, 2021

Impact of COVID-19 (#770)

Dr. Carranco compared data from the week of August 30, 2021, to data from the week of August 23, 2021.

Week-to-week comparisons revealed:

- In Texas, the average daily case counts increased from 11,500 to 15,021 cases per day, and the average daily positivity rate decreased from 16.1 to 14.9 percent;
- In Williamson county, the average daily case counts increased from 244 to 466, and the average daily positivity rate increased from 12.7 to 18.7 percent;
- In Travis county, the average daily case counts increased from 468 to 529 cases per day, and the average daily positivity rate decreased from 13.5 to 10.6 percent; and
- In Hays county, the average daily case counts decreased from 158 to 139 cases per day; and the average daily positivity rate decreased from 13.7 to 10.8 percent.

Hospitalization rates across Texas remained steady at 13,732.

During the first week of the fall semester at Texas State (i.e., week of August 23, 2021), the positivity rate was nine percent (271 positive tests out of 3,010 tests). By the second week, the positivity rate decreased to 4.8 percent (91 positive tests out of 1,907 tests). Although the Curative testing kiosk was closed for one full day and a small portion of the next day due to a supply chain issue, nearly 2,000 tests were performed, which is a large enough sample size to indicate that the spread of COVID-19 among Texas State community members is more contained than in surrounding communities.

As of September 5, 2021, active cases at Texas State were 474. By Cabinet meeting time, the active cases dropped to 215.

The University of Texas and Texas A&M recently reported positivity rates of 0.7 percent (48 positives out of 6,503 tests) positivity rate and 2.7 percent (791 positives out of 28,794 tests), respectively. Of worth noting, The University of Texas administers both Antigen and PCR tests, whereas Texas A&M and Texas State administer only PCR test. Antigen tests are more likely to generate false negative results.

Dr. Carranco provided a recap of the challenges encountered at the beginning of the semester. Given the intensity of the COVID-19 surge at the start of the fall semester, an increase in the number of positive cases being reported as students returned to the campuses was anticipated and prepared for. Examples include:

- Required students at greatest risk of transmission (those living in residence halls and student-athletes) to produce a negative test result upon move in.
- Launched a communication campaign (emails and social media messaging from President, Provost, VPSA, and Chief Medical Officer; about 70 large signs; and 2,000 flyers urging mask wearing) urging all community members to:
 - Get vaccinated.
 - Wear a mask when indoors.
 - Get tested before the start of the new semester, and every two weeks thereafter.
 - Stay home and get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
 - Promptly report to Bobcat Trace if testing positive for COVID-19 or have had close contact with someone who received a positive test result.
 - Isolate if test positive for COVID-19.
 - Quarantine if identified as close contact.
- Held mass vaccination events and marketed these events heavily to students.
- Reminded faculty that they have discretion and flexibility when it comes to how classes are implemented. For example, an instructor teaching a face-to-face course could begin a fall 2021 face-to-face class via Zoom for two weeks and then transition to in-person instruction to meet the 85 percent in-person threshold.

Despite these measures, the positive case counts reported the first two weeks were larger than expected. Going into week two, it was clear that the contact tracing team was not able to investigate every reported case in a timely fashion. This resulted in two issues:

- Some faculty received notification of a positive case directly from the students and not from Bobcat Trace.
- There was a delay in reporting from Bobcat Trace to the Roadmap dashboard. (On September 9, 2021, case counts were adjusted on the dashboard to include those 291 additional cases reported August 22, 2021, through September 7, 2021).

Other universities, including The University of Texas and Texas A&M University, are contacting only positive cases. At Texas Tech University, there is a process in place enlisting faculty to help identify close contacts. Given the challenges and benchmarking across other universities, the university determined that other processes were needed. During the second week of classes, the following new processes were implemented:

- When a positive case was reported to Bobcat Trace, the system pulled the student's class schedule and sent notifications to the professor and all students in the class.
- The contact tracing process was modified to prioritize case investigations based on risk. Students living in residence halls, student-athletes, and those reporting as unvaccinated and unmasked were prioritized based on the potential for spread of infection in those situations.
- A class report was developed to allow the contact tracing supervisor to look at the number of positive cases reported in each class during the previous seven days to identify situations that might need priority investigation.

Eight additional contact tracers will be added by the end of this week to bring the total number of Texas State contact tracers to 20.

Additional enhancements are forthcoming and will be relayed in targeted messages to faculty, staff, and students.

With case counts and positivity rates starting to decline on Texas State campuses and the addition of several contact tracers and other enhancements, it is expected case counts will continue to decline to more manageable levels and case investigations will be completed in a timely fashion.

Dr. Carranco summarized the approach the university has been taking to assess for possible signs of broad transmission occurring on its campuses. At this point, no evidence of broad COVID-19 transmission has emerged given that:

- Contact tracers have not obtained information during case investigations to suggest linked clusters of cases.
- Reported case counts decreased from 559 cases in the first week to 279 cases in the second week.
- The positivity rate for on-campus testing fell from 9.0 percent in the first week of classes to 4.8 percent in the second week.
- Residence hall cases have been reviewed, and there is no evidence of transmission occurring beyond roommates.
- The positive case database was reviewed to determine if there was any class with an unusual number of positive cases relative to the size of the class; and none was found.

One athletics group did have a cluster of positive cases, but close contacts were identified and quarantined quickly.

Enrollment Management (#9)

Provost Bourgeois and guest Mr. Gary Ray, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Marketing, reviewed the fall enrollment report. While fall 2021 enrollment is fairly flat, there are clear signs that the university has taken a significant step in overcoming the pandemic-related enrollment drop in 2020. The university enrolled the largest number of new students -- both undergraduate and graduate -- for the fall 2021 semester, surpassing 11,000 for the first time, thereby rebuilding the base and paving the way for future growth. The momentum and growth in new students reflect a strategic investment in new academic programs and a record level of new scholarships in the past few years. For example, Texas State expanded financial support in response to the pandemic, awarding \$40 million in student assistance in fall 2021 through the federal Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. Texas State also expanded the tuition-free Bobcat Promise program to give more Texas students the chance to attend the university. Investments like these not only led to the largest freshmen class Texas State has ever had, but also to significant gains in enrolled freshmen ranked in the top 10 percent and top 25 percent of their high school graduating class.

UPPS 04.04.41, Staff Employee Mediation and Grievance Policy

Mr. Algoe discussed replacing any reference to neutral arbiter with fair arbiter in UPPS 04.04.41, Staff Employee Mediation and Grievance Policy. Cabinet members provided feedback and approved the proposed changes to the language provided their feedback is implemented.

Dr. Hernandez discussed the need to develop a similar process for student employees.

President's Update (#556)

President Trauth announced that Mr. Mike Miller is the new Director for The TSUS Office of Internal Audit at Texas State University.

Last week, President Trauth signed a letter, along with prominent Texas business leaders, to Senator John Cornyn and Senator Ted Cruz urging them to take action to ensure a pathway to legal status for Texas' immigrant workers, including DACA recipients.

President Trauth announced that a Cabinet Retreat will be scheduled during the early part of the spring 2021 semester to discuss topics to include in a briefing for the next university president.

Significant Issues (#01)

Mr. Algoe announced that the timeline for the master planning process is being delayed for two reasons: to give the next university president a chance to oversee the process and to align with the next strategic planning cycle.

Mr. Algoe announced that San Marcos City Manager Bert Lumbreras is retiring at the end of January 2022.

Mr. Algoe discussed whether a remote work policy is needed for student employees. Cabinet members suggested that Mr. Algoe fold Dr. Andrea Golato, Dean of the Graduate College, into the discussion.

Mr. Algoe discussed the challenges employees are facing during the pandemic and reiterated the need for supervisors to utilize the remote work policy and remain flexible when possible.

Mr. Don Coryell recapped the Texas State versus Baylor University football game, highlighting robust attendance and new features, and addressing inappropriate student behavior and improve the quality of video production.

Dr. Hernandez announced that Dr. David Byrd joined her staff on September 7, 2021, as associate vice president for the Division of Student Affairs.

Dr. Silva announced the kick-off to the Hispanic Heritage month and reviewed the upcoming Hispanic Serving Institution week of activities and events.

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Posted to web at <http://cabinet.president.txstate.edu/> on September 20, 2021.