



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

September 16, 2020

Dear UNE Community,

Over the past week, York County, home to our Biddeford Campus, has seen an increase in positive tests for the COVID-19 virus. Although the incidence and level of community transmission in York County continues to be much lower than in most other areas of the country, the uptick in cases here within Maine is nevertheless concerning.

UNE's COVID Response Team has been monitoring the situation carefully. The committee has also been closely following practices at peer universities and regularly evaluating our own testing protocols. In order to minimize the risk to our community, we have decided to enhance our testing protocols for students in on-campus programs in Biddeford and Portland, effective immediately.

Going forward, we are asking any students who have found themselves in a situation in which they might have been at higher risk for contracting the virus to voluntarily go to the Student Health Center on either campus to be tested. The tests will be free of charge, and all students — undergraduate and graduate — are encouraged to take advantage of this resource without repercussions.

Examples of such higher risk situations would include:

- Travel to any state that is not among those which are exempt from Maine's testing/quarantining requirements. Exempt states currently include Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire, and Vermont
- Attending a party or other gathering, a religious service, or other social event in which social distancing or masking was not consistently maintained.
- Contact with an individual who is known or suspected to be positive for the virus, even if the level of contact does not technically qualify as "close" per CDC standards.

Students who volunteer for such testing will be granted immunity from any potential conduct violations related to the activity that puts them at increased risk. For example, students who volunteer that they have attended an off-campus gathering and who seek testing would not be punished for revealing their attendance at the gathering. Likewise, any other individuals, identified by the volunteer(s), or others, as participating in such an event through a contact tracing process, would also be exempted from conduct

violation processes in order to accurately ascertain the extent of the potential exposure. We are taking this approach to encourage students to come forward for testing as needed, without fear of incurring conduct violations, in order to prioritize the health of our community.

Conversely, students who do not voluntarily come forth and self-identify, and who are otherwise found through normal processes to have violated student conduct policies, will be subject to the normal conduct violation processes and consequences. For example, if a gathering is discovered by UNE staff in a dorm or off-campus-location and participating individuals have not self-identified, they will be subject to conduct violations, whereas if one or more participants come forward to identify that they participated, no one who attended the event will be subject to conduct violation repercussions.

This clarification and enhancement to our existing conduct and viral testing protocols is not a response to any specific gathering or to an increase in high-risk student behavior. It also does not diminish our collective responsibility to comply with the UNE Onward Promise and all relevant policies related to the pandemic. We must all recommit ourselves to wearing our masks consistently, to maintaining 6-foot social distancing, to rigorously following hand hygiene protocols, and to daily self-monitoring of our health status. We also continue to recommend that students avoid any unnecessary travel out-of-state. These measures represent the best way to prevent bringing the virus back to campus. Viral testing is not a substitute for these preventative measures.

We appreciate that, whether intentional or not, students may sometimes find themselves in higher-risk situations. The availability of this additional testing resource and the corresponding modifications of our student conduct guidelines will enhance our existing efforts to identify any cases of the virus that might potentially occur.

Please encourage all students to take advantage of this resource. I extend my thanks to the entire Nor'easter family for your efforts to continue our important work during these trying times.

Sincerely,

James D. Herbert
President