

The University of Alabama Administration's Answers to Faculty Questions

Submitted via Facebook Comments or ZOOM Chat During the
August 18, 2020 Faculty Senate Meeting.

1. *Is UA tracking whether cases stem from particular residences, populations, activities, etc., so that it can take action or urge caution? If so, will it communicate results / concerns in real time?*

Yes. The COVID Support Program is studying positive test results to determine linkages to geographic areas and then directing testing resources to those areas. Individuals in impacted areas are contacted directly by a member of the COVID Support Program. No positive cases have been traced to classrooms or academic spaces.

2. *Will UA announce enforcement actions (i.e., how many students or others on campus have been warned, or subjected to discipline, for health measure violations)? Will UA discipline students whose off-campus behavior creates great risk for the campus?*

Details of specific enforcement actions against individuals will not be shared publicly. Students who violate the Health and Safety Guidelines or any of our widely circulated interim policies, will be subject to harsh disciplinary actions, up to and including suspension.

3. *What is the threshold at which the University will go completely online? If the University has to go online, do we have a clear plan of how that change will be affected? Will covid-19 positive students be quarantined on site and be sent back to their in-town residences only after they test negative? How are students supervised for quarantine if they live off campus?*

The Situational Response Team is continuously monitoring multiple data points, including infection rates, capacity of isolation and quarantine spaces, testing capabilities and results, use of the GuideSafe platform, and capacity at the Student Health Center, University Medical Center and local medical facilities. Our team includes individuals with epidemiological, medical, and operational expertise who are in partnership with the medical and other experts on the UA System Health & Safety Task Force. The University will respond to any unexpected contingencies.

Detailed quarantine and isolation information is in our August 13 Return Plan Update:

1. **All faculty, staff, and students must comply with quarantine and isolation protocols** established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), including any that are required by our COVID-19 Support Program and its medical advisors.

<https://healthinfo.ua.edu/quarantine-and-isolation-housing/>

2. Those required to quarantine and isolate may return home. Off-campus students may stay in their residence. To assist students who live on campus, the University has designated approximately 600 quarantine and isolation spaces on campus. Students are provided with a secure location, private space, cleaning supplies, food deliveries, healthcare and counseling access, and accommodations for class and academics.

CDC and ADPH protocols are adjusted according to the latest science and community risk. Our protocols are continuously reviewed and updated by our UA System and UA teams.

4. *Has the Chancellor's Office required UA to hold back data – particularly daily or aggregate positive test results for students? Will we (faculty / staff) be apprised of on-campus test results in a timely and transparent manner? Alabama Public Health said they will not associate UA students who are out-of-state with the COVID-19 statistics for Tuscaloosa. Can we get the actual data for UA?*

No. We have not been asked to “hold back” data of any kind.

The UA System COVID dashboard is updated regularly: <https://uasystem.edu/covid-19-dashboard/>

All students tested on campus provide their local address for reporting purposes. ADPH has requested we flag them as UA students to ensure they are identified correctly in the testing data.

5. *When will the research labs be opened for undergrads?*

Effective August 3, undergraduate students were given approval to engage in research per the release of “Guidelines for Research Activity at The University of Alabama under Modified Full Operations.”

<https://healthinfo.ua.edu/research-information/>

Lead investigators are required to develop a Research Activity Plan that may involve research personnel including undergraduate students and graduate students. The Plan must be approved and adhere to our latest Comprehensive Health and Safety Plan.

6. *In an interview with AL.com on August 3rd, the Chancellor talked about UA's reentry plan and stated that “the worst result would be after all of this work and this system, which is so comprehensive, if faculty and students and staff don't do their part, then it will have been for nothing and we will not be successful.” Should we shift to remote learning earlier than expected, do you agree with the Chancellor that the fault lies with individual members of the*

University community and not with the University officials who drafted and approved the reentry plan?

The Chancellor and I are in total agreement that success will require all of us working together.

Are face shields acceptable face masks for faculty in face-to-face classrooms? Pedagogically speaking, we are required to record lectures during face-to-face teaching so students who are not in class have access to lectures. Between the masks and social distancing, how can we maintain clarity / quality of classroom lectures and discussion

We have modified the classrooms to ensure the appropriate distance between instructors and students, and taken the additional precaution of installing Plexiglas. UA System guidelines permit faculty to wear face shields when teaching, which can improve audio clarity, volume and quality. Faculty can use the classroom microphone, but students cannot in most instances. We encourage faculty to repeat questions posed in the classroom to share information with students participating online. Since the beginning of classes, we have made additional modifications to some classrooms (e.g., white boards, AV equipment, Plexiglas) as needed and continue to monitor and respond promptly to these needs. Please contact Dr. Luoheng Han in the Office of Academic Affairs for specific needs or challenges in individual classrooms.

7. *Can the data considered by the Situational Response Team be shared with all? Why will it take weeks to get daily test data for UA set up & posted? Troy University uses the same company that UA uses and can post updated epi stats daily, Monday-Friday, including where the cases are reported. Could we not implement this model for UA? Will there be extensive testing within the next two weeks?*

The UA System dashboard is updated weekly. We are testing faculty, staff and students daily.

8. *What are the classroom cleaning procedures and who is responsible for carrying them out? Are faculty and students expected to clean between classes (College of Education faculty were told that we are responsible for cleaning before and after our individual classes)? Will departments be reimbursed for expenditures related to cleaning & PPE?*

Daily building cleaning procedures:

Custodial Services uses Diversey Virex II 256 disinfectant for daily cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. Virex II 256 is a registered Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) disinfectant cleaner and has been approved by the EPA as effective against coronavirus. Custodial Services uses Virex II 256 as a daily (Monday through Friday) cleaning agent to clean and disinfect restrooms, classrooms, athletic, public, and administrative areas. The manufacturer's instructions are followed for all cleaning and disinfection products, e.g., concentration, application method, and contact time

Restroom Cleaning: In restrooms, Custodial disinfects toilets and toilet handles, urinals, and urinal handles, sinks and sink faucets, all restroom dispensers, floors, stall door handles, and restroom entrance handles and push plates and floors.

Exterior Building Entrances: Custodial disinfects exterior door handles and push plates, and frequently touched surfaces like ADA automatic door opening buttons. Interior of Building: Interior doorknobs, interior door push plates, handrails, and light switches, and other identified high touch areas are cleaned and disinfected.

Student/Employee responsibilities related to cleaning personal workspaces:

Students are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting their classroom desk/table via the use of disinfecting wipes located either in the classroom or in a central hallway for smaller classrooms. Instructors have communicated this procedure to students and will continue to remind them.

Faculty and staff are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting their personal workspaces including desks, computers, phones, etc. Disinfecting wipes should be requested through the University's centralized PPE inventory process via logistics.ic@ua.edu.

College/Department responsibilities related to cleaning supplies

Additional cleaning supplies or needs beyond those noted above should be procured by the department.

Departments can charge PPE costs to the CARES Governor Funding account to offset the cost of PPE supplies. All PPE orders must go through Finance and Operations. Contact Cheryl Mowdy at 205-348-0056 for more information.

9. What are the COVID protocols for the food courts and dining halls? For walking outside?

All dining halls and food courts are currently grab-and-go meals only. Students, faculty and staff should wear face coverings and practice social distancing when entering dining facilities to pick up meals.

Staff Plan

All employees of Bama Dining are required to have temperature checks before starting to work. Signage with information about symptoms and safety that is applicable to staff and students is at the entrance to all dining facilities. Consistent with UA policy, if a Bama Dining staff member answers yes to any question, they cannot work that day and should go home to self-monitor and check with their health care provider for additional guidance. All staff are required to wear masks in addition to hair restraints, gloves, and skid-proof shoes. Staff will observe the six-foot social distancing rule while working. Safety/sanitation leads will be at each location for all shifts to ensure highest level of cleanliness. Sanitation frequency (i.e. utensil, table, door, handle

sanitizing) will be conducted hourly. All associates performing food service duties are required to wash their hands every ~ 15 minutes. Individual national brand requirements will be followed at those locations (i.e. Chick-fil-A requires staff temperature check prior to beginning shift).

Facilities Plan

Hand sanitizer is easy to find at all locations. Plexiglas barriers are at register stations. Floor appliques ensure customer queueing requires a safe, six-foot distance between customers. All dining locations only accept cashless payment options.

Outside Walking

Anyone walking outside must maintain six feet social distancing OR wear a mask if that is not possible. Certain sidewalks have been marked as one way to discourage intermingling of people.

10. How are resources being allocated to account for the likely increase in mental health needs and resources (for both students and faculty), perhaps including teletherapy?

The Counseling Center transitioned to providing teletherapy for students in March. Counselors received training and education on the ethical and practical delivery of teletherapy through the American Psychological Association's resources. We are providing individual counseling, group counseling, support workshops, and crisis/urgent consultation services via video conferencing or telephone.

We have increased the number of workshops to include a broader range of topics that are pertinent to student concerns, including specific support groups for COVID-related stress: <https://counseling.sa.ua.edu/programs/mindmatters/>

We have implemented same-day non-urgent phone consult appointments. Students can call and schedule a same-day 30-minute consult with a therapist who can help with immediate concerns and make recommendations for future treatment and resources.

We have also significantly bolstered the online resource content: <https://counseling.sa.ua.edu/resources/> We continue to be available for outreach education opportunities across campus as well as same-day phone consultation for faculty, staff, and families.

I also want to highlight Therapy Assisted Online, a free online self-help resource for students: <https://counseling.sa.ua.edu/counseling/self-help-topics/free-online-self-help-ua-students/>

We are continuing our after-hours crisis services and partner with Crisis Text Line.

11. How many contact tracers has UA hired for on-campus tracing? What is the projected number of contact tracers to be hired?

The University of Alabama has a robust containment, exposure notification and contact tracing program. We have more than 30 employees in the COVID Support Program in all capacities (both contact tracing and otherwise), along with staff from other areas.

12. Has Dr. Bell, et al., ever mentioned efforts he and other UA/UA System admins have made to lobby the federal government for a bailout akin to that of the banks in 2008?

The UA System Government Relations team is working continuously with both the state and federal agencies to secure significant funding for COVID-related expenses as well as research and educational support.