



Monitoring and Responding to Anticipated Changes in COVID-19 Disease Progression, Fall 2020

A Focus on Public Health and Safety

Leaders of USM institutions have worked extremely hard over the past several months to ready their campuses for the unique circumstances of the fall 2020 semester. This work has been informed by the latest guidance and information from federal, state, and local public health officials. The result is a structure of best practices pertaining to testing, surveillance, and disease control that has helped each USM institution develop its own plan to protect the safety of its students and employees. Elements of these plans include de-densification of campus buildings and residence halls, COVID-19 testing and symptom monitoring, operational and schedule changes to limit transmission of COVID-19, provision of PPE and compliance with good hygiene practices, mask wearing, and enhanced cleaning of campus facilities.

The uncertainty surrounding COVID spread and impact demands that these plans be flexible enough to respond to disease risk in real time, changing as COVID conditions and safety guidelines change.

Campus Surveillance, Testing and Reporting

Out of an abundance of caution, the USM [announced](#) on July 30 additional procedures and protocols related to testing, symptom monitoring, and infection prevention and control for all students and employees returning to campus in the fall. Institutions are also in the process of establishing outlets to report on the number of positive COVID-19 cases on campus and will share such information with the university community as well as with local public health officials to facilitate contact tracing. These procedures are intended to help the USM fulfill its commitment to protect both the campus and the local community and reduce disease transmission.

Monitoring and Responding to Disease Progression

In addition to procedures related to testing and surveillance, USM leadership has worked collaboratively to develop systems for monitoring disease progression on individual campuses, within the state, and across the region, as well as plans to respond in escalating ways that focus on both containment and safety. Local public health officials will help guide these university responses.

Among the metrics in disease progression being monitored by campus leaders:

- Significant government disease-related action or decisions made by the governor or other state and local leaders.
- Significant increases in the percentage of symptomatic cases or positive surveillance tests on campus.
- Campus disease clusters that exceed an institution's ability to test, trace, and isolate.
- Supply chain issues that impact an institution's ability to conduct sufficient testing.
- A city's or region's decreasing capacity to accommodate students in need of support or treatment.
- Significant and sustained increases in local hospital admissions.

Institutions have planned for a variety of scenarios and developed potential actions to respond to such disease progression. Among these actions:

- Additional adjustment to residential and classroom density.
- Enhanced physical distancing and/or environmental cleaning.
- Short-term suspension of in-person classes, and/or closure of buildings and facilities in order to clean, disinfect, or conduct contact tracing in consultation with local health officials.
- Temporary or permanent closure of residence halls, dining facilities, and student centers.
- Increased use of remote learning and telework, or full campus transition to remote learning and telework.

The health and safety of students, faculty, and staff—along with the safety of local communities—will continue to drive the planning and administrative decisions of the USM and its institutions. Responding in real time to this historic and ever-changing pandemic will require flexibility and near-daily collaboration among state and local leaders, campus administrators, and public health officials.