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STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
COVID-19: July 16, 2020 Update
#SUSDoingOurPart

Board Members:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues its rapid spread globally and in many states in the U.S. While some countries, especially in Europe and Asia, have brought outbreaks under control, many countries continue to experience rapid increases in virus infections. The World Health Organization (WHO) issued a special statement this week saying that governments must place greater emphasis on suppressing transmission and reducing mortality. There have been over 13 million COVID-19 cases reported and 574,000 deaths globally. The WHO has reported that 20 percent of all individuals who are diagnosed with coronavirus are sick enough to need oxygen or hospital care. While the Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that from 20 to 40 percent of virus cases are asymptomatic, it continues to emphasize that the danger of COVID-19 is that people with mild or no symptoms can pass the virus on to others.

In the U.S., coronavirus cases rose in 38 states over the previous week, 12 states recorded an increase in cases of more than 50%, and 11 states reported record hospitalizations according to John Hopkins University (JHU) data. Current data shows over 3.4 million positive cases in the U.S. and 136,000 deaths. In most states, mortality rates have decreased or stabilized due to intentional interventions in nursing homes, earlier diagnoses of positive cases, and more effective therapeutics for treating patients. While states have increased the number and location of virus testing sites, the demand for test results, particularly in the South and the West, has skyrocketed due to the uncertainty of one's positivity. Currently, many testing laboratories, running 24/7, are unable to process tests quickly which results in delayed diagnoses and hinders public health efforts to track, isolate, and prevent spread. Twenty-four states now require face coverings in indoor public spaces.

In Florida, the statewide surge in positive virus cases continues, with particular concern over the record breaking increases in South Florida where many hospitals are near capacity and, more importantly, there are significant strains on doctors and nurses who have been caring for COVID patients since February. The latest Florida Department of Health data shows 301,810 positive cases *[30% increase (+69,000 cases) since last week]* and 4,521 deaths *[18% increase since last week]*. Hospitalizations in the state continue to increase and a record 15,300 new cases was recorded July 12th.

Governor DeSantis extended the state of emergency in Florida by 60 days and ordered mandatory COVID-19 testing every two weeks for staff members at the state's nursing homes and assisted living facilities. The Governor established five free antibody testing sites to focus on asymptomatic individuals and has assigned 1,000 additional contract health care workers to areas of need, particularly to special long-term care facilities devoted exclusively to coronavirus patients.

State University System

The State universities continue to review and update their reopening plans based on the latest guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control, the Florida Department of Health, and their local health care providers. Each university is proactively conducting practice drills and table top exercises in order to review policies and procedures for the Fall Semester reopening. The focus on these exercises is to prepare each campus to open safely and efficiently in consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the upcoming hurricane

season, and the possibility of civil demonstrations on campus. The exercises are primarily led by university emergency managers and scenarios are rehearsed, outcomes are reviewed, and operational adjustments implemented when warranted.

State universities are remaining active in providing assistance to their community members and to their external partners. Here are more examples:

Reaching Out to Florida Communities

- FAU College of Engineering and Computer Science researchers in collaboration with LexisNexis received a NSF grant to develop a model of COVID-19 spread using big data analytics techniques.
- FGCU's RESTART SWFL Initiative has granted Seals of Confidence to 15 businesses which signifies that the business owner agrees to adhere to a set of four standards involving health, business, and ethical practices and serves as a sense of assurance to customers.
- Florida Poly Data Science & Business Analytics faculty and students are utilizing big data research to develop an automated way to identify digital network content using communication patterns.
- New College is partnering with the Chicago Zoological Society's Sarasota Dolphin Research Program, based at Mote Marine Labs, to continue the world's longest running study of a wild dolphin population in Sarasota Bay.
- FIU College of Engineering & Computing, College of Arts, Sciences & Education, and Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine researchers are investigating whether it's possible that antibodies people carry from other viral infections are fighting the COVID-19 virus.
- USF Health, in collaboration with Tampa General Hospital, are sending more patients to their joint established telemedicine clinic to free up hospital beds for increasing demand by COVID patients.
- UWF researchers are working with Escambia County Natural Resources Management to test local waters for the presence of various Vibrio species, the "flesh-eating" disease necrotizing fasciitis.

Helping the Campus Family

- The FAMU and Bond Community Health Center COVID-19 Testing Site has expanded its capacity to 500 tests per day to accommodate the increased demand and respond to the spike in positive cases.
- FSU has established a Nole2Nole Peer Mentor Program to help new students feel like a part of the FSU community as first-year students are matched with one of 150 upperclassmen who are serving as remote "peer guides" during the summer.
- UF students have joined with the ContraCOVID student organization to create a COVID Resource Guide for the university community, including local websites, mental health hotline numbers, information updates, and food bank locations.
- UCF is developing an online dashboard to track COVID-19 cases in the campus community and provide updates on the virus and its impacts on the university.
- UNF Library's social media strategy which utilizes social media for outreach to students when remote services began received national recognition for innovative outreach approaches.

Many thanks to our university presidents and board of trustees members for their commitment to serve the State.

Work Hard to Stay Healthy!



Syd Kitson, Chair

REMEMBER: Practice Social Distancing! Wear a Face Mask!