

Winter Semester Asymptomatic Testing Recommendations – Public Health Advisory Group

November 4, 2020

Executive Summary:

We recommend the use of entry and weekly testing for all students in residence halls and for undergraduates coming to campus for in-person class or work. Our on-campus and off-campus student populations are interconnected, whether or not students come to campus facilities. For this reason, testing of large off-campus, university-affiliated houses is essential. Entry testing should be required for faculty and graduate employees prior to beginning in-person instruction. Weekly testing will be available for faculty, graduate employees and staff.

These recommendations have been developed independently from recommendations regarding the degree to which U-M will have in-person instruction or occupied residence halls in the winter semester.

Assumptions:

For the purposes of furthering operational planning, the following strategies are based on these key assumptions, (however these strategies should not be taken as endorsement of these assumptions):

- (1) Undergraduate residence halls will be open at occupancy that is further reduced from Fall Semester levels,
- (2) Graduate residence halls will continue with existing operations
- (3) In-person instruction will continue at existing levels for graduate students and at some undetermined level for undergraduate students,
- (4) Research and other on-campus work will continue at Fall Semester levels.
- (5) Flint and Dearborn campuses have unique needs that will be assessed and addressed separately.

These recommendations also do not encompass other needed PH-recommended initiatives (e.g. universal influenza vaccination, reduced campus density, required and enforced daily symptom screening). It is critical that asymptomatic testing capacity continues to be made available to students and to those individuals working on campus, even if the level of in-person activities in Winter Semester is much lower than in the fall.

Recommendations for Winter Semester

<i>Entry and Departure Testing</i>
<p><u>Require</u> a negative test for new arrivals prior to move-in for <u>residence hall residents</u> (undergraduate and graduates) for the winter semester.</p> <p><u>Require</u> a negative test within a week prior to beginning any on-campus activities (class, research, work) for any undergraduate student.</p> <p><u>Require</u> a negative test for faculty and graduate employees with in-person teaching prior to the start of the semester*.</p> <p>Entry testing should be made available for all off-campus students and <u>required</u> for students living in university-affiliated off-campus large houses.</p> <p><u>Require</u> a negative test for undergraduates departing university housing before returning to their permanent residence, and will be <u>recommended and available</u> for all other undergraduate and graduate students.</p>
<i>Weekly Testing</i>
<p><u>Required</u> for all students living in residence halls. Graduate students in on- and off-campus residential communities will be offered this testing on a voluntary basis.</p> <p><u>Required</u> for all undergraduates living off-campus who are participating in on-campus activities, including in-person classes, research laboratories, or on-campus employment.</p> <p><u>Voluntary</u> for off-campus students who do not work or attend class on campus.</p> <p><u>Voluntary</u> for all faculty and graduate employees with in-person teaching. This should be <u>required</u> for those teaching in settings where exemptions from classroom mitigation policies are in place (e.g. inability to distance or wear masks).</p> <p><u>Voluntary</u> for all staff working on campus.</p>
<i>Additional Testing Initiatives</i>
<p>Prompted surveillance testing will continue for those not mandated to participate in weekly testing.</p> <p>An allocation of at least 500 tests per week will be available for additional asymptomatic testing by request for individuals not enrolled in weekly testing initiatives.</p> <p>Testing of individuals in quarantine, as recommended by CDC, will be expanded to students living off-campus through administration of testing at the site of quarantine.</p>

*We have been advised that this may be subject to collective bargaining requirements for members of LEO and GEO.

Rationale and Considerations

Mandated Testing:

Entry testing is essential to identify asymptomatic or presymptomatic students that could unknowingly spread infection in residence halls and other congregant living situations. Entry and weekly testing should be mandated for residence hall residents as well as undergraduates who come to campus for class, research or work. A remaining concern is the importance of maintaining high levels of testing in undergraduates living off-campus, whether or not they come to campus. Our on-campus and off-campus students are socially interconnected. Fall Semester patterns of spread demonstrated this interconnection. For this reason, extending testing requirements to large university-affiliated houses is necessary to slow transmission. Increased off-campus testing efforts will bolster the public health response in the off-campus populations where more mitigation is needed, and will reduce spillover into on-campus residence halls. A community engagement process to proactively offer entry and ongoing testing to the off-campus community is needed and must begin immediately.

For faculty and graduate employees teaching in the classroom, it was noted that the classroom has been a low risk setting thus far, especially when people comply with distancing and masking requirements. However, we have seen infection rates rise in the broader community in the age range of many of our faculty and graduate employees. In light of these increases in transmission and concerns about traveling and gatherings that may occur over the semester break, we advise that faculty and graduate employees with in-person teaching be tested prior to in-person teaching. This same rationale motivates our recommendation that every undergraduate participating in on-campus activities must demonstrate a negative test within a week prior to beginning those on-campus activities (class, research, work).

Lastly, departure testing is an important way to reduce the spread of the virus to students' families and communities. Requiring a negative test for undergraduates departing university housing assures them they are not carrying the virus to their permanent residence. Applying this public health principle more broadly, we believe departure testing should be recommended and available for all other undergraduate and graduate students.

Testing Initiatives Cannot Operate Successfully without Full Implementation of Other Public Health Recommendations:

Testing alone will not mitigate transmission unless widespread compliance is occurring for other public health recommendations including social distancing, masking, enforcement of limited gathering sizes, universal influenza vaccination, enforcement of required symptom monitoring and efforts to de-densify campus. *This is particularly important at the beginning of the semester, when students will need to practice enhanced social distancing after arriving on campus.*

Investment in Increased Testing Must Include Investment in Supporting People with Positive Results:

Testing programs do not operate in isolation. Increased identification of cases, while an intended goal of the testing program, only helps to reduce transmission if individuals with a positive test can be successfully isolated and their contacts quarantined. This requires increased resources to ensure that people with positive test results and their close contacts can be cared for fully and promptly.

Enforcement of Entry Requirements and Ongoing Testing Requirements:

One of the challenges of entry requirements is in caring for students who were not able to get a negative test result before arriving on campus. In these cases, rapid antigen tests with fast turnaround times can be used to clear students for move-in. This initiative will require partnership with Housing and ITS. Likewise, our Fall Semester experience with targeted, mandatory testing in residence halls has shown us that these efforts must be coupled with a clear and appropriately-resourced enforcement strategy. The consequences of not complying with required testing must be communicated prior to the beginning of the semester.

Test Type, Supply Chain Concerns, and Availability of Home-based Pre-arrival Testing:

Current university testing programs rely on PCR testing, except for athletics. Availability and feasibility of antigen-based tests should continue to be explored to support the recommendations. Antigen tests may reduce cost or provide an alternate testing pathway in the event that supplies for PCR become restricted. In addition, more work is needed to determine the best option for home-based testing for pre-arrival testing for entering the residence halls.

Development of Recommendations:

Draft recommendations were reviewed by the School of Public Health Advisory Group with input COVID-19 Campus Health Response Committee. Contributors to these recommendations include:

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