



## From President Tim Sands: Participate in InclusiveVT Week Sept. 7-11

I invite you to join me in celebrating InclusiveVT Week ([https://www.inclusive.vt.edu/Programs/inclusivewt\\_week\\_2020.html](https://www.inclusive.vt.edu/Programs/inclusivewt_week_2020.html)) on September 7-11. InclusiveVT Week occurs annually the week after Labor Day and is dedicated to adhering to and promoting our institutional and individual commitment to *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve) in the spirit of community, diversity, and excellence.

It has been an overwhelming summer, with the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, the shooting of Jacob Blake and deadly violence in Kenosha, and the ongoing impact of the pandemic and systemic racism on communities of color. Taking time to consider how each of us can foster a more inclusive Virginia Tech is more important than ever.

This year's theme, "Where Everyone Belongs," encourages us to welcome newcomers to our community, engage in thoughtful conversations, and connect through events and activities that promote access, inclusion, and growth.

As a part of InclusiveVT Week, you will receive an invitation to view the online course: Diversity: Inclusion in the Workplace. The course explores concepts of equity and inclusion that are relevant to workplace processes and relationships, as well as provides practical strategies each of us can use in order to create a more accepting workplace. We invite you to complete the course, Diversity: Inclusion in the Workplace.

I encourage you to participate in InclusiveVT Week, learn something new, and challenge yourself as we work together to make our university a welcoming place for all.

## University launches dashboard updates each weekday

Tuesday's debut of a reconfigured COVID-19 dashboard (<https://ready.vt.edu/dashboard.html>) features a daily update of a seven-day number of positive test results from Schiffert Health Center as well as the number of students currently in quarantine or isolation according to the Housing and Residential Life isolation and quarantine data.

The new dashboard, retooled based on feedback and input from the Virginia Tech community, will be updated each weekday by noon.

Note: This dashboard only includes data from testing performed at Virginia Tech through the auspices of the Schiffert Health Center. Test results from off-campus labs and clinics and private health care providers are combined with data from Schiffert Health Center in the reports generated by the Virginia Department of Health (<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-in-virginia/>).

Tuesday's updated dashboard will show the number of positive cases broken out in two categories, one for students and one for employees. These numbers show a cumulative total of 500 positive COVID-19 test results for students and three for employees since Aug. 3. A total of 11,984 tests have been administered. In the last seven days (Aug. 31 to Sept. 6), the number of newly confirmed cases of COVID-19 is 327 — 324 for students and three for employees. There are 119 on-campus students are in designated isolation/quarantine space. With the existing campus isolation and quarantine space and the ability to expand if necessary, we are able to manage the expected need for our students.

Although the case numbers have increased, the trajectory remains within the university's expectations and projections. As explained at the President's Town Hall on Sept. 3 (<https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2020/09/unirel-townhallsept3.html>), the start of the semester brought an increased student population living in close proximity to each other. Still, local officials, including President Tim Sands and Noelle Bissell, director of the New River Valley Health District, are confident that Virginia Tech is in a good position to see case numbers plateau in the coming weeks before beginning to decline.

As Bissell said, all indications are that student cases are largely staying within the student population and not spreading into the broader community.

Despite these indications that COVID-19 can be contained in the community, the significant number of new cases each week reinforces the need for all members of the university community to strictly adhere to public health guidelines:

- Wear a mask or face covering at all times, indoors and outdoors.
- Avoid large gatherings and remain physically distant from those around you.
- Wash your hands frequently.

In addition to strictly following public health guidelines, it is imperative that students, faculty, and staff who have symptoms or believe that they may have contracted COVID-19 inform university health professionals or their local health practitioner. This will allow for good health counseling and testing, along with effective contact tracing through the Virginia Department of Health, to help contain the spread of the virus.

While the university maintains that it is counterproductive to punish students by retroactively investigating how they contracted COVID-19, officials will utilize the student conduct process to address

dangerous behavior that creates the conditions that spread the virus.

A driving goal for Virginia Tech remains the preservation of the essential elements of the in-person educational experience — instruction and labs, life within residence halls, and everyday encounters that lead to strong personal relationships, unique personal growth, and learning moments for our students — while caring for the health of our students, our dedicated faculty and staff, and the larger community.

## Keeping watch on COVID-19 through surveillance testing and case management

Building on Virginia Tech's COVID-19 testing strategy, the university has implemented surveillance testing for students and high-contact employee groups and a case management process to help those in the university community who test positive for the virus.

**Surveillance testing defined:** Surveillance testing is different from diagnostic testing. A diagnostic test is used to confirm an illness, such as performing a COVID-19 test on someone with symptoms to confirm if they are positive or negative for the virus.

Surveillance testing provides a way to test groups of individuals who are assumed to be healthy in order to make predictions on how an illness spreads in populations.

“Surveillance testing is an important part of our overall efforts to monitor and minimize the spread of COVID-19 at Virginia Tech,” said Mike Mulhare, assistant vice president of emergency management. “With surveillance testing, certain populations will be tested more frequently, which helps us understand the overall health of our campus and provides data that can inform decisions about Virginia Tech operations.”

**Surveillance testing at Virginia Tech:** Surveillance testing strategy ([https://vt.edu/content/dam/vtnews\\_vt\\_edu/documents/090220-COVID-19%20Surveillance.pdf](https://vt.edu/content/dam/vtnews_vt_edu/documents/090220-COVID-19%20Surveillance.pdf)) focuses on three testing categories that will continue through the fall 2020 semester: High-contact employees, ongoing student population testing, and student athlete testing.

Ongoing testing of the student population will occur throughout the fall semester to monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 within the campus community. Surveillance testing will occur through an ongoing testing clinic, and will include residential and off-campus students. The frequency and number of these tests will be a function of the university's overall testing capacity. Students selected for surveillance testing will receive a letter with instructions on how to schedule a test appointment.

Student athletes will be tested following the ACC guidelines.

High-contact employees are individuals or groups of employees who are at a higher risk of exposure due to the nature of their job or academic responsibilities. These employees are in close contact with or have a higher interaction with the public or each other and often cannot

maintain physical distancing, which is defined as being within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes.

Based on the exposure risk levels described in the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) Emergency Temporary Standard Sec. 16 VAC 25-220 (<https://www.doli.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RIS-filed-RTD-Final-ETS-7.24.2020.pdf>), Virginia Tech identified approximately 1,100 employees whose risk of COVID-19 exposure based on their job is very high, high, medium high, or medium. The majority of the employees identified fell within the medium high or medium categories.

Voluntary testing will be available to faculty, staff, and wage employees as well as student workers who fall within the high contact definition, as testing allows based on the university's overall capacity. The university's goal is to test the entire population of high contact employees every 2-3 weeks.

High-contact employees will be notified directly by their department or college leadership or human resources partner and will receive an invitation to schedule a test appointment. High-contact employees will be tested at no cost to them. Employees should complete the Hokie Health check (<https://emergency.vt.edu/programs/HokieReadyApp/HokieHealthCheck.html>) and receive a “green OK” from the app before reporting for their test appointment.

“While testing for high contact employees is voluntary, we encourage these employees and student workers to take advantage of this opportunity,” said Bryan Garey, vice president for human resources. “The test is free to these individuals and testing will be counted as part of time-worked. Their participation in the university's surveillance testing is critical to helping us understand the potential spread of COVID-19 on our campuses.”

For individuals who are not identified to be part of a high contact group, but believe they have an increased level of risk due to their role, an exception process exists to determine surveillance testing eligibility. Employees who believe they are in a “high contact” position should contact Hokie Wellness at 540-231-4600.

Employees should be prepared to answer a series of questions about the contact they have in their role, other on-site work factors that may put them at a higher risk, and the environmental and personal protective measures that are in place. Determinations on exceptions will be made case-by-case based on the information provided by the individual.

**Symptomatic testing and reminders for students, faculty, and staff:** Virginia Tech's investment in surveillance testing will help the university identify trends and make predictions. However, testing for students with COVID-19 symptoms or for those who have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 will always take priority over surveillance testing.

Read full story: <https://vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2020/09/campus-tracking-covid.html>

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