

**From:** Neil Matkin <[nmatkin@collin.edu](mailto:nmatkin@collin.edu)>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 20, 2020 2:37 PM  
**Subject:** College Update & Happy Thanksgiving!

Esteemed Colleagues,

I have much to report as we head into the Thanksgiving season. Here at Collin College, even in these challenging times, we have much to be grateful for.

### **SACSCOC Visit**

First, we hosted our Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Off-Campus Instructional Site Committee on November 11 and 12. The Interim Off-Campus Instructional Site Committee “virtually” visited Collin College as a component of the accreditation Fifth-Year Interim Report. The purpose of the visit was to ensure that each new off-campus instructional site where Collin offers 50% or more of an academic program, approved since the time of the last reaffirmation in 2015, meets the standards and principles of accreditation.

Prior to conducting the visit, the committee received a report outlining aspects of Collin College operations of Off-Campus Instructional Sites including site administration, faculty qualifications, how quality of programs is evaluated, how students receive academic, student services and library support, as well as the physical facilities at each site. Over the course of the two-day visit, the SACSCOC Visiting Committee met with students, faculty, staff, and administrators from each of eleven off-campus instructional sites, including the Technical Campus, the Wylie Campus, the Public Safety Training Center, and eight different dual credit sites representative of dual credit partnerships throughout our service area.

In the exit meeting, the chair of the visiting team praised the college for being thorough, collegial, and responsive. It did not stop there. We were told that the college was exceptional and a model for how the accreditation process is supposed to work. Finally, we were referred to as an exemplar. As you might imagine, since we had not been briefed on any of the findings at this point, I was bracing myself for the worst!!! It never came.

The committee went on to express their appreciation for the College’s “virtual hospitality” and the flawless technical support calling out Sarah Densmore for her exceptional handling of all of the logistics of the visit. The findings of the committee will be submitted to the SACSCOC Board of Trustees with the results shared with the College in June of 2021. At this point, there was a single recommendation that we believe will be fairly straightforward to address.

A major “Thank you!” to Drs. Sherry Schumann and Jon Hardesty along with the whole cast of people it takes to meet these requirements.

### ***Lift Up!* Campaign**

The annual *Lift Up!* employee giving campaign kicked off November 1st and runs through December 1st. Supporting the *Lift Up!* employee giving campaign is easy. Everything can be

done with a few clicks at [www.collin.edu/foundation](http://www.collin.edu/foundation) or by calling the Foundation office at 972.599.3146. In 2019, employees contributed more than \$150,000 to help students, which is enough to fund 100 full scholarships. As unique as 2020 has been, the need for scholarships remains as strong as ever. We ask you to again *Lift Up!* our students through participation.

Last year, Janyth and I matched the first \$5,000 in new donations – we’ve upped it to \$6,000 this year. Those of you who know us know that higher education forever changed the trajectory of our lives. I know many of you feel the exact same and it is a great honor to be able to fund students who need it. Thank you for your help. Whether large or small, 100% of your contribution goes to support our students!

### **COVID-19 Update and Thoughts**

Since the pandemic began in March 2020, we have all worked to preserve safety and provide college services to our students. Since reopening the college on June 1, we have learned a great deal.

First and foremost, I want to take this opportunity to encourage everyone to remain vigilant. With the news of a vaccine around the corner, it may be tempting to let our guard down. On my wife’s side of the family, we have two 31-year old nephews. In one of my sister’s family, we have a third nephew, 30 years old. All three contracted Covid-19 at about the same time. One passed in three weeks and another in just one week. One was perfectly healthy and the other had severe underlying conditions. The third nephew who is in hospice prior to COVID, tested positive for COVID antigens but had no ill effect from the disease. While we all look forward to celebrating a COVID-free world as the vaccine(s) promulgate, sadly, we are not there yet. With Thanksgiving and the holidays just around the corner, please take precautions. Jay Corwin, our VP for Student Success, will be sending out a reminder to all of our students as well.

Allow me to walk through briefly an overview of Covid-19 cases associated with the college at all sites for this time period.

### **Background**

Collin College had very few faculty or students on campus throughout most of the summer and classes were predominately online during that time period. A limited number of spring 2020 lab courses, primarily in nursing and health professions, as well as select lab science courses, were completed on campus following stringent safety guidelines. Many students and faculty in the health science courses were accustomed to adhering to various health and safety protocols which expedited a return to face-to-face instruction to complete the spring semester.

In preparation for the fall 2020 restart, protocols for monitoring, quarantining, and isolation were developed for all employees and students. Guidelines were developed for the Dean of Students Office and Human Resources which took the lead on student and employee cases, respectively. The fall semester began on August 24, 2020, and the college resumed offering classes online, in a blended and hybrid formats, and in face-to-face classes.

### **Limitations of Data Collection and a Database**

Before the start of the fall semester, the college began utilizing a database to track student and employee COVID-19 information. The college does not provide testing to students or employees. As a predominantly commuter college, we do not have health professionals on staff to administer coronavirus tests. As a result, all information collected by the college is solely self-reported. Every situation is entered into the database, including exposures that never result in a positive case. This system is maintained by the college's Emergency Management Office and is accessible to select personnel in the Dean of Students and Human Resources Offices in order to maintain the privacy of individual information reported.

Depending on each situation, the system guides the user through a decision tree that ensures each self-reported case is managed consistently throughout the college according to pre-established protocols that were implemented. While the data on reported cases are extensive, the college cannot assure the accuracy of self-reported data and often unverified positive test results. The lack of verification, however, does not alter the safety protocols the college has put in place.

### **Decision Factors**

Each reported case is unique. Protocols for notification, quarantine, and isolation take the following into consideration:

#### **Date of symptoms**

- Date of the test (regardless of the type of test)
- Date student or employee was last on campus
- Compliance with social distancing
- Compliance with face covering

#### **Categories**

- Presumed Positive – Individuals self-report testing positive on an antigen or antibody test
- Positive – Individuals self-report a positive PCR test or have a medical diagnosis

#### **Previous Reports (Points-In-Time)**

On September 22, 2020, six cases were reported to the NY Times. These were based on a point-in-time and captured only active cases wherein students had been on campus after their test date.

On October 27, 2020, 89 student and employee cases were reported to the Board. These were based on another point-in-time and reflected self-reported positive PCR results, but did not include students in fully online courses.

#### **Conclusions for the Covid-19 Response**

Since these reports were provided, efforts have been made to clarify the categories, remove duplicate entries and conduct additional follow-up with students and employees.

As of November 10, 2020, there were 29 students in active quarantine with 212 students who have returned after quarantine. This is not just face-to-face students but students in all modalities. For employees, there were 9 in active quarantine with 15 having returned from quarantine. Strictly for context, that is a total of 241 students out of 35,392 total fall credit students and 24 self-reported employee cases out of 2,600 total employees. To date, we are aware of one Collin College student who has passed away from complications from Covid-19 and, as of last week, one faculty member. Currently, one other staff member is hospitalized.

At this writing, we have no evidence of a “super spreader” type event wherein multiple cases have emanated from a singular point on any of our campuses. We believe that the comprehensive safety protocols put into place immediately prior to the June 1 return to work and since enhanced prior to the beginning of the fall semester have been effective. Almost a week prior to Governor Abbott’s statewide order and prior to our own Faculty Council’s resolution requesting it, the college announced a mask requirement on June 25 to be effective 8 a.m. June 29, 2020. Prior to the fall semester, 100 requests for work-at-home accommodations were received from college faculty. Of these, seven were not approved and three withdrew the request leaving 90 who received accommodations for the fall semester.

We are very fortunate the have the technology and training to accommodate most requests by faculty. Staff, dependent upon the particular job, have been approved to the extent possible. In many cases, employee schedules were adjusted to afford greater social distancing for those reporting to the campuses. The Human Resources department has managed all of this health-related information in order to protect individual privacy. Accommodation requests for the spring semester are lower at this writing but not yet finalized.

While we believe the approach the college has taken has been effective to date, we continue to monitor reports in order to make adjustments or improvements as needed. Any loss of life is too many. A month after this began, I knew of no one personally who had lost a loved one. As the pandemic continued, this changed rapidly, and I know many of you have lost loved ones and friends.

### **In Closing**

I am deeply proud of so many who have worked so hard to get us through the challenges we have faced thus far. I know some of you remain deeply concerned. If you have outstanding concerns, please work through the appropriate shared governance committee (Faculty or Staff Councils) or through your supervisor.

Again, please be safe and take appropriate precautions over Thanksgiving and through the remainder of the semester.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday,



H. Neil Matkin, Ed.D.

District President