



UMCES Spring Semester Testing Plan February 5, 2021

Background

The goal of the Spring Semester Testing Plan is to reduce the coronavirus disease spread within our community. In conjunction with the University System of Maryland, UMCES will significantly increase coronavirus testing of faculty, staff, and graduate students who come to campus. To the extent possible and practical, UMCES will partner with institutions within the USM to aid in testing of the individuals in the regions where they work. It is important to review what was learned at UMCES facilities during the Fall 2020 Semester and continue to use the best mechanisms to stop the spread of COVID-19 amongst our researchers, staff, and graduate students and within the broader community. To date, UMCES has experienced 10 known cases of COVID (and no deaths) of individuals who had access to UMCES facilities.

Recap of what UMCES learned during the fall semester:

- Setting facility-based de-densification rates (<50%) with appropriate controls was manageable;
- All classes were delivered online with minimal disruption;
- Communication conducted at multiple levels driven by the COVID Communications Team and a Return to Campus Committee have been effective in receiving broad community input;
- UMCES established a COVID-19 web page prominently linked to UMCES home page, which is updated regularly and heavily utilized;
- Regular 'All-Hands' and Unit meetings have been an important venue to outline new guidelines, procedures, testing schemata, as well as important advisories from the USM, State, and CDC;
- Strictly following the State's Travel Advisory for professional *and personal* travel, while constraining, gave a level of flexibility sought by the community;
- Local testing sites were able to accommodate testing in **most** regions of the state;
- Individuals followed strict social distancing and mask wearing, with no flagrant (purposeful) violations;
- Significant staggering of maintenance staff, researchers, and graduate students was effective in reducing face-to-face interactions while maintaining facilities, research, and animal health and production;
- Without health professionals on staff, the initiation of an "ask-a-nurse" service was successfully employed and used; and
- Communication within the USM was enhanced through frequent Chancellor COVID calls, COVID Institutional Project Manager meetings, as well as the continuing availability and invaluable advice from Drs. Jo Boughman and Kate Tracy to UMCES.

Spring Testing Plan

The fundamental philosophy of UMCES continues to be protecting researchers, staff, and graduate students and the communities in which they reside. This is achieved through telework wherever feasible, online teaching, and maximizing social distancing through staggered work times while minimizing presence within facilities. This results in intermittent and staggered presence of individuals in a low-density environment that minimizes face-to-face interactions.

Most UMCES researchers, staff, and graduate students continue to work at home and come into their office or laboratory only when necessary. Approximately half of them have **not** requested any access to campus. There is a contingent of researchers, staff, and graduate students who come in regularly to conduct laboratory-based research, for animal care and production, and to maintain facilities and administrative services.

The Spring Semester Testing Plan applies to any employee who comes to UMCES on a regular basis, **excluding** those who only work from home or come on campus occasionally.

Regularly on Campus: Researchers, staff, and graduate students who come to campus on a regular basis, defined as more than one time per week and/or more than 4 hours in any given day, **need to be tested monthly.**

- The first test must be obtained before March 1 and regularly each month through May. Testing results will be reported to hr@umces.edu.
- Permission to be on campus is still required by Unit Directors, and daily health monitoring will still be required.
- We continue to follow the [State's Travel Advisory](#) for professional or personal travel out of the region.

Occasionally on Campus: Researchers, staff, and graduate students who come to campus for occasional periods, defined as less than one time per week and less than 4 hours that day, **do not need to be tested.**

Work from Home: Researchers, staff, and graduate students that do not come onto campus during the Spring Semester **do not need to be tested.**

NOTE: *Researchers, staff, and graduate students at the UMCES Appalachian Laboratory will follow the Frostburg State University (FSU) Spring Semester Plan. That includes the manner in which FSU defines the type and testing of researchers, staff and students based on how frequently they come to campus. UMCES greatly appreciates this relationship with FSU.*

UMCES has research staff at four major research units and two offices. Because the two offices are lightly staffed those facilities try to ensure that only one individual has access at a time minimizing any potential for work-related transmission.

The focus of the UMCES plan is to expand testing significantly by 1) relying on local testing centers for expanded testing; 2) partnering with FSU; and 3) purchasing home rapid test kits that can be fully administered by the individual when they become available. UMCES recognizes that the COVID situation continues to evolve rapidly and the availability of testing technologies is improving and unsupervised *rapid* home-testing is likely to become feasible in the coming months.



Partnering with Frostburg State University

The UMCES Appalachian Laboratory is adjacent to Frostburg State University and they graciously offered and provided testing to our researchers, staff, and graduate students who regularly come to campus throughout the Spring semester. These individuals will be following FSU's testing regimen based on their definitions of time on campus.

Relying on Local Testing Availability

In the fall semester most researchers, staff, and graduate students relied upon local testing centers or doctors' offices within the county that they either live or work in. Those at the Appalachian Laboratory had access to PCR testing at FSU and a number of them took advantage of that service. Therefore, UMCES will require **all** researchers, staff, and graduate students that are **Regularly on Campus** to get tested monthly at local testing centers or doctor's offices. **This would amount to at least a quadrupling of testing of researchers, staff, and graduate students compared with the fall 2020 semester.** These individuals would still have to strictly adhere to [State's Travel Advisory](#) and other relevant guidelines recommended by the State and CDC that gets incorporated into UMCES guidelines. Even if an individual has been vaccinated, they would still be required to follow the UMCES testing regiment and [Return to Campus Plan](#).

Rapid Home Test Kits

UMCES looks forward to when *unsupervised rapid* home test kits become available. UMCES would consider immediately purchasing quantities of rapid home test kits necessary for twice-weekly testing of our researchers, staff, and graduate students. UMCES would work with the USM and state and local health departments to determine if and how these rapid home test results could be uploaded into the State's CRISP system.

Conclusion

UMCES will be relying upon a hybrid approach for a significant expansion of testing of its researchers, staff, and graduate students throughout the Spring Semester. This hybrid approach will rely on: 1) having our researchers, staff, and graduate students regularly on campus getting tested monthly at local testing centers; and 2) partnering with FSU for the researchers, staff, and graduate students at the Appalachian Laboratory. UMCES will expand to twice weekly testing for those regularly on campus if unsupervised home rapid tests become readily available. UMCES will also update and submit a new plan to the USM for consideration when significant changes to our implementation plan are proposed.