

Wabash.

November 16, 2020

To: Wabash Community
From: President Scott Feller and Dr. Ann Taylor
Re: Community Update: Week 15

Today we begin our last full week of the semester with classes concluding and final exams beginning later in this week. Finishing the fall term in residence is a tremendous accomplishment, and it is worth reflecting on the challenges that we have faced both individually and collectively over the past few months. It should give you pride in what you have done and confidence in this community's capacity to join together to tackle giant challenges.

Our campus is facing two separate challenges as we conclude the semester. The challenge for students is to return home in the safest, healthiest manner possible. We urge all students to review and act on the recommendations in this [New York Times article](#) and the College's guidance distributed previously. At the same time, our faculty and staff face the challenge of navigating their daily lives in a community experiencing a dangerous surge in COVID-19. The rising number of positive cases in the past month, which continue unabated, is stressing our health care infrastructure. Hospitals in our region are experiencing intermittent shutdowns of emergency rooms and intensive care units, and our health departments are struggling to carry out the contact tracing and educational outreach required to reverse this trend. As a tight-knit community, Wabash can demonstrate leadership and provide a model of the behavior changes needed to navigate this crisis.

The deteriorating situation in Montgomery County makes it even more impressive that we observed a relatively low 1.4% positivity rate in last week's surveillance testing. It is important for students to remember that this sampling still implies that at any moment there are a dozen cases among the student body. To reduce the likelihood of taking COVID home for Thanksgiving, you must shrink your bubble, keep your distance, and be vigilant about wearing a mask any time you are around others. Several students exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 tested positive last week via rapid antigen testing at the Student Health Center. While there is some uncertainty in the proportion of symptomatic and asymptomatic cases of COVID, the number of students testing positive based on symptoms is also consistent with an underlying infection rate of 1-2%.

We should have played the 127th Monon Bell Classic in our new Little Giant Stadium this past Saturday. While all of us would rather be cheering in the stands and playing on the field, our coaches remind us that games are won both on and off the field, and that we should celebrate the victories we have. These are just a few of our successes: completing a semester of on-campus teaching and learning; a strong first destination placement rate for the Class of 2020; raising over \$195 million in our Giant Steps Campaign; and an enduring brotherhood of students who continue to support each other in challenging times. As Coach Don Morel said in a [Journal Review article](#) on the cancellation of the Monon Bell game, "If this is the worst thing that happens to you in your life, you're going to end up living a pretty good life." So, congratulations, and keep up the fight.

With gratitude for you and all you bring to campus,

President Scott Feller
Ann Taylor, Special Assistant to the President for COVID Response and Planning