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## STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM COVID-19: May 1, 2020 Update #SUSDoingOurPart

### Board Members:

Concern and caution continue to fill the minds of most Americans this week, although there is now room for some optimism. Although positive COVID-19 cases and deaths continue to increase nationally (over one million cases in U.S.), there are states that are finding that positive virus cases are in decline and that the capabilities of their health care systems have stabilized. Projection curves are being flattened. As of today, here are the latest data on the COVID-19 virus:

- 3,247,600+ COVID-19 cases and nearly 230,600 deaths globally (212 countries) – *World Health Organization*.
- 1,053,030 cases and 61,547 deaths in the U.S. (all 50 states) – *Center for Disease Control and Prevention*.
- 33,690 Florida cases (all 67 counties) [*a 18% increase since last week*]. 32,801 Florida residents and 889 non-Florida residents. 1,268 deaths have now been reported in Florida [*a 37 % increase since last week*]. – *Florida Department of Health*.

In Florida, while the impacts of the pandemic have been severe and have not ended, early predictions of debilitating amounts of illness and fatalities have not materialized. Many believe that the discipline and resolve of Floridians resulted in a lessening of the impacts of the virus as citizens embraced social distancing before it was demanded by federal and state officials. Impressive and so critically important! Civic leaders are now grappling with when will be a safe time to re-open their communities and what guidelines should be in place.

During this past week, Governor DeSantis's Task Force to Re-Open Florida and its three Industry Working Groups, consisting of leaders in business & industry, government, tourism, restaurants, hotels, and education, met daily to develop guidelines needed to re-open the state's economy. In group discussions, two recurring themes emerged: (1) the health and safety of all Floridians, including employees and customers, is the top priority, and (2) there must be clear, specific, easily understandable guidelines in place. The Governor just released his "*Safe, Smart, Step-by-Step Plan for Florida's Recovery*" which is designed to be a phased, methodical, and data-driven approach to re-open the state's economy. Briefly, the Plan will be implemented in three phases and Phase One will begin May 4, 2020. The overarching

points of emphasis are to: (1) protect the vulnerable; (2) increase testing; (3) promote social distancing; (4) support hospitals and protect health care workers; (5) prevent introduction of the virus from outside the state.

Governor DeSantis has been visiting some of the major health care centers in the state, including Miami, Orlando, and Tampa, and has engaged with state university medical research teams in these areas. This week, the Governor expanded mobile testing teams and added community-based and walk-up test sites to provide greater access for Floridians to virus testing. Statewide, over 384,000 COVID-19 tests have now been administered to Floridians, with approximately nine percent found to be positive cases.

### **State University System**

Spring Semester 2020, with its sudden turn to the totally remote delivery of classes, is coming to a close. During this past week, the 12 state universities have been working to distribute the initial federal *CARES Act Emergency Financial Aid* funding (\$126 million for the SUS) via direct payments to eligible students with financial need on each campus. Additionally, the universities have provided over \$68 million in refunds or credits to students with Spring Semester housing or food service contractual obligations.

I am pleased to learn that State university administrators, alumni, and student government groups are continuing to raise funds to financially support their students through the COVID-19 pandemic via emergency aid, grants, and loans. To recognize these efforts, a unique webpage is being added to the Board of Governors website that will enable you to locate and learn about the emergency funds that each university is compiling to provide financial assistance to both students and staff. Here is the link: <https://www.flbog.edu/covid-19-financial-assistance/>.

State university boards of trustees, presidents, and academic leaders have now turned their attention to planning for the Fall Semester 2020, despite many uncertainties. Clearly, projections on the status of the pandemic from a four-month distance are just educated guesses and likely to change over time. It is a stressful time with many concerns; chief among them are the physical and mental health of students and employees, the prospects of student attrition, and the realities of unbudgeted financial costs combined with lost revenue. More importantly, university leaders are unsure when their students will be returning to their campuses. Few leaders see a scenario for fall semester in which it will be business as usual on their campuses.

Despite the hectic pace of these weeks, outreach and partnering by our state universities to their communities and to the state has continued and not diminished. Here are more examples:

### **Reaching Out to Florida Communities**

- The FAU Cane Institute for Advanced Technologies at A.D. Henderson University School and FAU High School students ranging from ages 5 to 18 have

created 3D printed face shields, intubation chambers and ear savers for hospitals in Palm Beach County.

- FIU has launched a South Florida Health Disparities Project, a geographic dashboard that break downs and monitors COVID-19 virus cases by gender, race, age, and ethnicity in South Florida.
- A FGCU bioengineering student has used 3D printers to create and donate 350 reusable, face shields for frontline health care workers in SW Florida.
- The FSU Office of Research Development re-designed its Collaborative Collision event to bring together faculty members from various departments to work on projects specifically targeted at the COVIDh-19 pandemic. Researchers from throughout the academic disciplines gathered via Zoom to tell their online audience about prospective projects, what they were looking for, and how they could help other research endeavors.
- New College students and dancers from Sarasota Contemporary Dance participated in a virtual National Water Dance performance. Nationwide, participants livestreamed their dance on social media as part of a nationwide effort to draw attention to climate/water issues.
- UNF faculty and students teamed up with members of the Chinese community of Jacksonville to donate \$78,000 worth of PPE supplies to Baptist Health hospitals.
- USF Health has teamed up with Hillsborough County to offer COVID-19 testing to residents in several neighborhood community centers in Hillsborough County in order to make testing as convenient as possible to all residents.
- FAMU students are distributing care packages to needy families in the FAMU community that include hand sanitizer, gloves, masks, toilet paper, teas, and other items.

### **Helping the Campus Family**

- FAU Work Study students now are able to complete the virtual National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) badging program (over 700 now have completed this option). Further, completion of the Professional Internship program can be achieved virtually through illustration and articulation of the NACE core competencies.
- Florida Poly has re-designed its Capstone Design Showcase into a three-day virtual presentation that enables senior students to virtually exhibit and present their capstone projects and discuss them with industry professionals and community members.
- The FSU Student Resilience Project is an online, trauma resilience training tool that teaches students to build knowledge and skills to help them deal with the challenges of the pandemic. The online tool uses animation, videos and numerous TED-talk style educational audio sessions from faculty and mental health providers.
- The UCF “Knights Care Leave Share” program enables UCF employees to voluntarily donate accrued annual or sick leave into a campus leave bank to help fellow employees who do not have the option to work from home and have exhausted their leave.

- The UF Lastinger Center for Learning launched a new resource hub of free resources for students, parents and teachers, including free use of MathNation which provides 24-hour access to instructional videos and on-demand support for middle school mathematics.
- USF St. Petersburg has initiated the “St. Pete Friends” program that connects students with senior citizens to reduce social isolation and develop new bonds during the pandemic. Students connect with citizens via phone, video chat and traditional letters.
- UWF Counseling and Psychological Services is offering its student support services via remote access. Online resources include [Therapy Assistance Online](#) that provides access to self-help modules that assist with anxiety, depression and other common concerns, and a library with resources for coping with anxiety and stress related to COVID-19.

There is tremendous energy and determination now throughout Florida! As our citizens have responded positively to social distancing orders, our state universities are moving forward and have prioritized the health and safety of their students, and our SUS researchers are working non-stop on virus testing, treatments, and a vaccine.

After many dark days, I can see some light at the end of this tunnel!

Stay Healthy Everyone!



Syd Kitson, Chair

*REMEMBER: Practice Social Distancing! Stay at least 6 feet from others; Stay away from crowded places. **Best Advice: STAY HOME!!***