

COVID-19 Updates: Dashboard, Action Alerts and community webinars

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Tulane's new COVID-19 Dashboard is now available online to keep you informed about the number of COVID-19 cases within the campus community. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Last Friday, President Michael A. Fitts, Provost Robin Forman and Chief Operating Officer Patrick Norton sent a university-wide email to announce that Tulane had launched a new [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) and elevated its [Action Alert level](#) from Yellow to Orange.

“Earlier today, we launched a dashboard to keep you better informed about the number of COVID-19 cases within our campus community,” the university leaders wrote in the email. “It [the dashboard] does show an increase in positive COVID-19 cases among our on-campus undergraduate students, which is of concern and is something we are addressing.”

The message went on to note that since the end of July, Tulane completed more than 20,000 tests — far more than any institution in the New Orleans region.

“Finding positive cases on campus does not mean our positivity rate is any higher than other segments of the city, which are tested far less often. But identifying positive individuals and their close contacts is foundational to protecting our campus and New Orleans community,” the message read.

The leaders also announced that the university’s Action Alert level would be elevated from Yellow to Orange.

We asked Scott Tims, assistant vice president for Campus Health, to explain exactly what the elevated Action Alert level means.

“Elevating our Action Alert level indicates that we are taking extra action to identify and isolate positive cases and limit the spread of the virus. It also indicates that we need everyone in our community to have heightened awareness and to take action — to make sure that all health strategies are followed closely,” Tims said. “We wanted to make sure that our community continues its vigilance — especially limiting gatherings to no more than 15 people and masking and social distancing throughout the Labor Day weekend.”

Tims said campus health officials are closely watching the number of positive cases in the Tulane community and adjusting their health strategies quickly in order to best protect the campus and New Orleans community.

“At the end of August and in the beginning of September we saw an increase in numbers, which wasn’t too surprising — it’s what other schools have seen as well. But I think the way that we’ve adapted by increasing our extensive surveillance testing, as well as our isolation and quarantine capacity, is unique and more comprehensive than what other schools are doing,” Tims said.

“If we continue to see lower numbers in the coming weeks, like we’ve seen over the past few days, we’ll likely reduce our Action Alert level back down to yellow. But we need to make sure that our students are taking these guidelines seriously. We’ve seen a lot of commitment and compliance and we’re hopeful that we won’t see an increase in cases following the long weekend.”

President Fitts, Provost Forman and COO Norton also announced that they would be hosting community webinars to answer questions about safety protocols and other measures the university is undertaking to limit the spread of COVID-19. Other participants in the webinars will be Tims; Lee Hamm, senior vice president and dean of the School of Medicine; David Mushatt, associate professor of Medicine and section chief, Tulane Adult Infectious Diseases; Erica Woodley, dean of students; and Shantay Bolton, deputy chief operating officer. Since the message went out, a separate webinar for faculty and staff has been added:

- The webinar for **students (undergraduate and graduate) and parents** will be held on Thursday, Sept. 10, at 6 p.m. CDT

Registration link: <https://tulane.edu/covid-19/webinar-students-parents-091020>

- The webinar for **faculty and staff** will be held on Thursday, Sept. 10, at 4 p.m. CDT

Registration link: <https://tulane.edu/covid-19/webinar-faculty-staff-091020>