Campus Testing Plan

As ECU prepares to reopen in the context of endemic COVID-19, a testing strategy will be adopted to alert leadership if campus cases exceed the community case rate, or other indications of higher risk of infection for those on-campus versus those off-campus. This approach will focus on symptomatic surveillance as the first and most sensitive approach and a cohort study of campus individuals as the second line.

Testing for Students

ECU Student Health Services (SHS) is currently offering testing for COVID-19. ECU is doing both polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing and antibody testing. The PCR testing is being collected with nasal and nasopharyngeal swabs. The antibody testing is being collected with serology.

Samples are being collected for students at ECU SHS and at outreach locations as needed. Testing is being performed on students with symptoms and known or suspected exposures. Some specific high-risk groups have received mass baseline testing, including dental students, medical students and student-athletes.

Currently, specimens are being processed at the following locations:

- LabCorp: Specimens are picked up each day by LabCorp couriers.
- Vidant Medical Center: Specimens are picked up at SHS by Vidant couriers.
- North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health: Specimens are sent to the state lab via FedEx per state lab requirements.

SHS receives results in 24 to 96 hours, depending on the lab, with results typically received within 48 hours of testing. Tracking of patients with positive results is being performed by ECU SHS staff. Positive results are being entered into the state tracking system by the testing lab.

On-site testing is available but limited by the state; however, SHS will receive a limited supply of tests at the beginning of August that can be performed on campus.
Testing for Student-Athletes

Testing of student-athletes is being completed on a schedule set forth by their conference. The athletic department will use a combination of careful symptom screening and testing a group of departmental members weekly using both PCR and antibody tests.

The plan is to randomize the athletic department's population (which includes student-athletes and employees, such as trainers, who have regular contact with athletes) in such a way as to go through the entire department, testing each person once before returning to the list's beginning. Antibody testing would identify individuals who may have had an asymptomatic case of the disease.

Testing for Employees

ECU employees receive testing through various channels:

- Their personal physicians
- The Vidant Medical Center Occupational Health Clinic or Emergency Department
- A county health department
- An urgent care facility
- The ECU Office of Prospective Health (OPH)

When employees are referred to OPH, they are telephonically screened, depending on the reason for referral: exposure to a COVID-19 positive individual, travel history, potential return to work after six days of quarantine, and/or symptoms of disease. If testing for disease is indicated by OPH, arrangements are made through the ECU Physicians Department of Family Medicine to have the PCR test collected at its on-site testing facility. The tests are performed at the Vidant Medical Center laboratory, and results are normally available to OPH the next morning.

Generally speaking, the cost of the tests is covered by employees' insurance.

Symptom Screening

University IT is leading the development and deployment of a mobile symptom screener. Starting with a daily message to faculty, staff and students, each university person will be reminded to complete the daily symptom screener. This will be a brief questionnaire of symptoms of COVID-19, querying about fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, and other common manifestations, as well as whether the individual knows that he or she has been exposed to someone who has COVID-19.

Individuals whose responses suggest that they might be infected will be directed to consult with a health care professional, SHS for students, and the individual's primary care physician or ECU Physicians for employees.

Research Cohort

An arm of the North Carolina state-supported Community Testing and COVID-19 Testing Study, or ComPACT, will be conducted on campus with separate support. This will use the same protocol and follow-up as the state study, and it will represent a systematic surveillance component in addition to the symptomatic intervention for cases on campus.

Aggregated data from all campus testing will be evaluated by the ComPACT team to identify if the case rate on campus indicates the need to consider additional mitigation strategies.