

We are now one month into the semester after students returned to campus for face-to-face classes, so we would like to provide another update on the status of COVID-19 at Grand Canyon University.

For starters, don't be alarmed by headlines you may have seen in the Arizona Republic -- "GCU cases rise 80% in a week" -- which is incredibly misleading, especially when juxtaposed against headlines that show declines at state universities. While the headline technically is accurate, it needs context because an 80% increase on a small number at GCU is still a small number, while other universities initially had much higher numbers that are now decreasing.

When universities across the country began their fall semesters, it was common to see an initial spike in positive COVID cases. Many were reporting hundreds of active COVID cases each week and now have totals of positive cases in the thousands.

GCU began in-person instruction much later than other universities so is just now seeing that initial start-of-semester spike -- although, thankfully, at a much smaller scale. There are currently 67 active cases of COVID-19 on campus. Dating back to Aug. 1, there have been a total of 189 positive cases among students, staff and faculty. Even one positive case is one too many, but we have steps in place to care for those individuals while also conducting rigorous contact tracing and quarantine protocols to prevent the spread of the virus. To date, no GCU students have suffered serious illness or been hospitalized due to COVID-19.

We believe our ability to house students who need to be placed in isolation or quarantine in a separate facility has helped prevent the spread of the virus. This summer, we designated the GCU Hotel to house individuals who have tested positive as well as those who, out of precaution, are placed in quarantine if they have come in close contact with an infected individual. Bed capacity at the 153-room hotel has remained steady at about 48% for the past 10 days, allowing students to have their own room unless they request to isolate with a classmate who has also tested positive. Students are also allowed to quarantine off campus if they have family in the area.

GCU is currently averaging just over 100 students in isolation or quarantine at the hotel each day, which is indicative of the University's very rigorous and detailed contact tracing protocols. Rather than ask students to quarantine in their residence hall room, GCU removes those at-risk students from the general population and houses them in the GCU Hotel, at no cost to the student except meals they would already be paying for, in order to 1) better care for them, and 2) better prevent potential spread of the virus. GCU's rigid contact tracing is faster than even what our local health authorities are able to perform, which leads to quicker placement in the hotel.

Out of an abundance of caution, GCU has also relocated just over 150 students who were residing in Canyon Hall so that the residence hall can be available if overflow from GCU Hotel is needed. Right now it is not needed and no students are staying there. We hope that remains the case. But if an outbreak were to occur with a large group of students -- for example, within a specific floor of a residence hall or with a team of student-athletes who are in close contact with one another -- having Canyon Hall available better ensures the health and safety of the entire campus community.

As we shared previously, we want to be very transparent about the number of positive COVID cases on GCU's campus and we update that data twice a week on the University's [COVID information page](#) under an FAQ in the "Health" section.

To ensure that we are indeed flattening the curve from this initial onset of positive cases, we remind all students that they must remain diligent, wash your hands frequently, maintain physical distancing and wear a

face covering both indoors (other than your individual residence hall room) and outdoors (where 6 feet of physical distancing is not possible).

Students thus far have been very good about wearing masks in classrooms and other indoor settings, but tend to waver from those protocols in crowded outdoor settings. [This article from Johns Hopkins Medicine](#) is a good reminder on how to deal with coronavirus burnout and pandemic fatigue. By staying committed to these preventative practices until there is a vaccine and being respectful of your fellow classmates and faculty members, we'll get through this together.