

GCU is handling the coronavirus differently than many universities in one significant way: There are designated spaces on campus in which to house students who test positive and need to be placed in isolation (GCU Hotel) and for those who have come in close contact with someone who tests positive and need to be placed in quarantine (Canyon Hall).

Rather than expect students to quarantine in their individual residence hall rooms, GCU's approach creates a safer environment for those students, allows us to better care for them and helps prevent the spread of the virus among the rest of the campus population.

This approach also creates challenges when the number of positive COVID cases increases, as we've seen recently in the aftermath of off-campus social gatherings during Halloween weekend, because there is also a corresponding increase in the number of students who need to be placed in quarantine. Students in quarantine must have single rooms to ensure they do not potentially spread the virus to someone else if they end up testing positive while in quarantine.

Given these circumstances, we have decided to designate Cypress Hall as an overflow quarantine space in case it is needed. Students currently located in Cypress will be relocated to other residence halls, with assurances that their housing costs will not increase even if they are moving to a residence hall that is more expensive.

There are currently 175 active COVID cases connected to campus – about 1% of the campus population – which is up from the 133 positive cases we reported in our last communication on Nov. 6. While that number is still less than what we're seeing at many universities, it does mean we need to ensure that adequate quarantine space is available if needed.

We hope to see the number of positive cases flatten or decrease as we get further removed from Halloween weekend, but out of an abundance of caution we have decided to create the additional quarantine space at Cypress in case it is needed. It serves as a reminder that students should avoid off-campus gatherings, particularly if protocols such as face coverings and physical distancing are not being observed, and remain diligent in those practices while on campus, both indoors and outdoors.

We remain confident that we'll finish the fall semester on a strong note and be well-positioned for an even better spring semester in 2021.

To reach the GCU Health and Wellness Clinic or request a COVID test, call 844-391-1949. Tests can also be scheduled by visiting gcu.studenthealthportal.com.