

**Subject:** Update on UWA's COVID-19 Response and Testing  
**Date:** Monday, August 31, 2020 at 4:48:38 PM Central Daylight Time  
**From:** UWA President  
**To:** All Faculty and Staff, All Students  
**Attachments:** image001.gif, image002.png, image003.png, image004.png, image005.png, image006.png

## A Message from UWA President Ken Tucker

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Dear UWA Family,

As we begin our third week of classes on campus, I would like to extend a hearty “thank you” for the patience, cooperation, and diligence that has been modeled across campus since our return. I would also like to share an update on what’s next in terms of the University’s response to COVID-19.

We have seen and heard throughout the state and nation many stories—some good and some bad—of how other colleges and universities have handled their return to campus. I want you, the members of the UWA family, to know without a doubt that your efforts are recognized and applauded. Moreover, I want to thank you for your commitment to having observed restrictions and alterations put in place to minimize risks on campus. By keeping safeguards in place and continuing to focus on safe practices, we can look forward to being able to continue our semester on campus.

As you are aware, we partnered with UAB, Alabama Department of Public Health, and the statewide collaborative of colleges and universities to implement GuideSafe™ Entry Testing for students taking classes on campus. This process helped establish parameters necessary to assess needs and risks. Through this entry testing program, 24 UWA students (roughly 1.9% of the on-campus student population) were detected to have COVID-19. Significantly, the vast majority of these students were asymptomatic.

Currently, there are three students and one employee (roughly 0.2% of total on-campus population, compared to 15.9% for the general state population) quarantined as a result of a positive test result for COVID-19, with 18 additional members of the University in quarantine based on our protocols related to exhibited symptoms and/or possible exposures. While these numbers are encouraging, we understand that COVID-19 is still very present in our communities and our nation. We also understand that our situation can change in an instant; however, we strongly believe that with our continued efforts and focus as a campus we can minimize the risk

of community spread and achieve the best possible semester on campus this fall.

To assist the University as we progress in the semester, GuideSafe™ will begin the Sentinel Testing phase on Wednesday here at UWA. Through this program, individuals will be chosen through a randomized algorithm with parameters set by Verily (the service GuideSafe™ uses for testing registration). Individuals selected by the system will receive an invitation to be tested and can then select a convenient available time. Sentinel Testing will include faculty and staff as well as students. This effort, steered by medical researchers, is expected to produce a week-to-week snapshot that they suggest is most effective for each campus to evaluate trends. Our reporting will align with this testing cadence and will continue with the program through the fall.

I have been encouraged by the vigilance that I have seen on our campus since our return to campus. I have noticed students and employees alike walking in pairs wearing masks, and others walking socially distanced, and it reminds me that our character is said to be who we are when no one is looking. You have likely heard me reference Stephen Covey's works in the past, and I'm drawn to character traits that he describes in his "Win/Win" paradigm—two being integrity and maturity. He suggests that integrity helps us align our actions with our values and that it also gives us a foundation for trust with others. Covey says maturity is our ability to balance our convictions with the convictions of others, and it's also our ability to take a long-term view and focus on increasing the standard of living and quality of life for all stakeholders.

These two traits will carry us far—far beyond this semester, but also farther into this semester. We must continue to uphold our values, our University's values, and trust one another, offering support and encouragement, even when criticism may simply come easier. We must also recognize that opinions and convictions are more abundant now than perhaps any time in memorable history, and there can be a fair balance for all that upholds the greater good.

Again, I want to thank you for all that you are doing to help and support one another. Returning to campus is not the end of the journey but a milestone, although certainly not the time for a victory lap or a reason to relax our protocols. Instead, we must continue daily to renew our focus on continuing the semester in a healthy and safe manner. I look forward to continuing this journey alongside all of you.

Take care and be safe,

**Ken Tucker, Ph.D.**

President

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**[Download the Operational Plan for Fall Semester 2020](#)**

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