University of Alabama sees 1,000 virus cases since reopening

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The University of Alabama, seen as a test case for returning to in-person learning amid the pandemic, has reported close to a thousand positive coronavirus cases since reopening.

The school has published a COVID-19 dashboard which shows a total of 566 positives since last Wednesday when term started, in addition to 400 people who tested positive when arriving.

Local news site AL.com quoted university president Stuart Bell saying the problem did not stem from student behavior on campus but probably came from the community.

"What we have to do is identify where does the virus thrive and where does the virus spread and how can we work together with our students, with our faculty and with our staff to make sure that we minimize those places, those incidents," he said.

The city of Tuscaloosa, which is home to the university's main campus, announced Monday it would close bars and bar service at restaurants for the next two weeks.

The college has about 45,000 students across its Tuscaloosa, Birmingham and Huntsville campuses making it a key test case for returning to in-person classes.

According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, which is tracking 3,000 institutions, 20 percent have plans for primarily in-person classes, 27 percent say they will go primarily online, 15 percent are opting for a hybrid and 24 percent haven't announced plans.

Last week the University of Notre Dame in Indiana announced it was moving to online instruction after a coronavirus outbreak, as did the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Michigan State.

Bell said the University of Alabama was continuing to take steps to stem the spread but wouldn't say what it would take to move to online learning.

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