

Another 481 COVID-19 cases found at University of Alabama

29 August 2020, by Kim Chandler



People make their way along The Strip, the University of Alabama's bar scene, Saturday, Aug. 15, 2020, in Tuscaloosa, Ala. More than 20,000 students returned to campus for the first time since spring break, with numerous school and city codes in effect to limit the spread of COVID-19. (AP Photo/Vasha Hunt)

The University of Alabama reported Friday that an additional 481 students have tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the total to more than 1,000 infections since students returned to campus for the fall.

The University of Alabama System released new numbers on its [dashboard](#) of cases for all three campuses. The additional 481 cases on the Tuscaloosa campus were reported between Aug. 25 and Aug. 27. The university system said no students are hospitalized.

"We are closely monitoring our data daily, and we will continue to adjust operations as the situation warrants," said UA System Chancellor Finis St. John in a statement accompanying the release of the numbers. He said testing for the virus was a "key pillar" of the university's health and safety plan.

St. John said every student on the three campuses has the option of moving to fully online instruction at any time, remaining either on campus or returning home to continue their course work.

The university has not announced official fall enrollment figures. Kellee Reinhart, a spokeswoman for the university system, said the enrollment will be upwards of 30,000, which would equate to infections being reported in about 3.3 percent of all students.

The quick rise in COVID-19 cases on campus prompted action from city and university officials to try to limit student gatherings and off-campus socializing.

The university last week announced a 14-day moratorium on all in-person student events outside classroom instruction. Social gatherings are prohibited on and off campus and the common areas of dormitories and fraternity and sorority houses are closed, according to the new guidelines. Visitors are not allowed in dormitories or sorority and fraternity houses.

On Monday, the mayor of Tuscaloosa ordered bars closed for the next two weeks. Maddox said an unchecked spread of the virus threatens both the health care system and the [local economy](#) if students are sent home for the semester to do remote learning.

"The truth is that fall in Tuscaloosa is in serious jeopardy," Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox said earlier in the week.

The university system said in a news release that because it takes several days after exposure for an individual to test positive, the benefits of the bar closing measure and other compliance strategies "will not be reflected in testing data for several more days."

St. John thanked Maddox for taking that action.

"We remain concerned that off-campus transmission is our greatest risk, which is why we asked Mayor Maddox to consider that action. We thank him for making that difficult decision to protect our campus community and Tuscaloosa."

The Tuscaloosa campus has accounted for the bulk of student cases in the three-campus university system. Since Aug. 19, there have been 10 student cases at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and 10 student cases at the University of Alabama at Huntsville.

While most people who contract the coronavirus recover after suffering only mild to moderate symptoms, it can be deadly for older patients and those with other health problems.

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