

As you read this, many of you are preparing to travel to Phoenix for Move-In Week and the resumption of in-person classes at Grand Canyon University. We can't wait to welcome you to campus as part of the GCU community!

Student Leaders returned to campus recently to undergo training and help with preparations for Move-In. Students in some academic programs such as nursing and athletic training also started on-campus classes early in order to fulfill their previously scheduled clinical requirements, which could not be postponed.

We're happy to report that there have been no known positive COVID-19 cases that have been transmitted from classroom settings thus far. Our nurses and athletic trainers have been in class for a couple weeks, including laboratory settings. All are wearing face coverings and adhering to physical distancing requirements in the classroom.

However, there have been a total of six positive COVID cases among the roughly 2,000 students on campus during the past two weeks. Through contact tracing, we believe all six students contracted COVID-19 off campus and then returned to campus. Per our protocols, the instructors and students in each classroom where those students were present before testing positive were notified. Due to the physical distancing and mask-wearing in those classroom settings, the virus was contained in each instance to that one individual and there was no further spread or outbreak.

Only individuals who have been in "close contact" with someone who tests positive are required to quarantine. "Close contact" is defined by the CDC as being within six feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes. While students are in class for more than 15 minutes, if they maintain six feet of physical distancing and wear a face covering, the exposure risk is considered low and thus there is no requirement to be quarantined.

All six students who tested positive are in isolation and doing well.

The six positive cases are a reminder that everyone has to be diligent about COVID-19 protocols on and off campus. That means wearing a mask indoors (other than your residence hall living space) and anywhere outdoors where physical distancing is not possible, including walkways, seating areas and other crowded spaces. It also means practicing physical distancing, washing and sanitizing your hands often, participating in testing and tracing as necessary, performing daily wellness checks and staying home if you feel ill.

It will take each of us acting responsibly and abiding by all these requirements and behaviors for this to be a successful semester.

Four other things to be aware of as you return to campus next week:

1) Reminder of GCU's visitor policy:

In order to maintain the safety of the GCU community and minimize potential spread of COVID-19, students are not permitted to have guests in their living areas. An exception is granted for a family member or friend who is actively assisting in unloading or loading a vehicle as part of the move-in/move-out process.

In other community areas on campus, visitors and guests are discouraged so that we can reduce the number of outside individuals on campus. If a visitor must visit in community areas, that individual should wear a mask and abide by all safety measures throughout campus.

2) Outdoor safety:

[This graphic](#) from the CDC depicts the safest conditions when individuals are 1) wearing a mask, 2) practicing social distancing, and 3) are outdoors, where coronavirus particles disperse more quickly than they do indoors. GCU has added [many outdoor seating areas](#) on campus. Masks may be removed when eating in these areas.

3) Campus eateries:

In preparation for the fall semester, the Maricopa County Department of Health Services performed regular inspections of all 32 GCU dining locations and reviewed COVID-10 processes and protocols that are in place. All locations received an "A" rating.

4) Campus crosses:

As you return to campus, you are encouraged to check out the [trio of new crosses that are on display](#) near GCU Arena -- serving as a symbol of peace, forgiveness and redemption. They are a dedication project from the 2020 senior class that had their final year interrupted by the pandemic.

As Pastor Tim Griffin put it, "The cross is so symbolic of hope and victory that to display that in this time in our nation's history, in our world's history, it couldn't be more fitting."