Community Conversations with Provost Joseph Helble  
Wednesday, October 14, 2020 — 3:30 PM EDT  
Student Assembly Notes

Part I: Provost Helble Introduction
- Physicians Lisa Adams (co-chair of Dartmouth’s COVID-19 Taskforce) and Antonia Altomare (an Assistant Professor of Medicine) along with Hanover Town Manager Julia Griffin will join the conversation.

I. COVID-19 Testing
   A. Testing continues daily at Leverone, and is available weekly at Williamson for those working at the Lebanon research campus.
   B. Waiting times are short. 1-2 minutes at most.
   C. Over 7,000 individuals have been tested.
   D. Our peer institutions in New England have positive testing rates nearly as low as ours.

II. Winter Term
   A. Operationally, we expect winter term to function much like fall term.
   B. Dartmouth will welcome about half of the undergraduate student body back to campus.
   C. Testing, arrival, and quarantine protocols will be the same as fall term.
   D. Group size and activities will be limited. All indoor spaces, including dining, will have capacity limits.
   E. Classes will primarily be offered remotely or in a hybrid format.
   F. Due to weather, there will be no outdoor tents. Dartmouth is working to create structured outdoor activities for students.
   G. Who will be back in the winter? After reviewing the plans of students approved for winter term, we are now able to open a waitlist for students (‘23s and above). These students have until this Friday to get on the waitlist, and will be notified of the results next week. Priority will go to students only approved for one residential term for the 2020-21 school year.
   H. Unfortunately, we will not be able to accommodate more students in winter than fall. Conditions have not changed, and there is evidence that increasing population density increases risk of COVID-19 transmission.
   I. We anticipate that the start of winter term will be delayed by a few days, most likely to January 7, 2021 for undergraduate and Thayer students. This is to allow enough time for staggered arrivals prior to the start of classes.
   J. There is no question that this is hard. We are asking everyone—students, faculty, and staff—to make sacrifices for the good of the community.
III. Winter and Spring Sports
   A. Decisions on athletics seasons have not been made. The presidents of the Ivy League will
declare as a group later this year.
   B. Student athletes will, unfortunately, have to make plans for winter and spring prior to a
decision being made.

Part II: Questions from the Audience

I. It seems that Dartmouth has built nearly a perfect bubble. Why not close the bubble and allow for
normal activities within that bubble?
   A. This is something that the Task Force talked about when designing fall term. We asked
ourselves if this is feasible or reasonable.
   B. For a variety of reasons, this did not feel right for who we are as a college. We could not restrict
faculty who needed access to campus resources, and did not want to take away the freedom of
students to do things such as hikes, long runs, and some flexibility to leave campus.
   C. The rules we created are reasonable. They protect the public health, and allow a safe amount of
freedom to the community.

II. How many students have been asked to leave campus this fall? Why were they sent home? This
information would help students make better decisions about how to behave, and would put rumors
to rest. Why is there not more transparency?
   A. Dartmouth has never announced when students are asked to leave campus. This number is not
quantified. This would be a violation of our students’ privacy, and could lead to the
community targeting these individuals.
   B. The Dean of the College takes reports about non-compliance seriously. These reports are
evaluated fairly.

III. Why are there restrictions on activities and gatherings?
   A. We are following state and federal guidelines. This means limiting the number of individuals
allowed in close proximity to prevent the spread of the virus.
   B. Dartmouth studied information on indoor spaces, like airflow and the frequency with which
surfaces are cleaned, to create the current restrictions.

IV. How is mental health, physical wellness, and academic success factored into decisions about living
facilities?
   A. Dartmouth takes these concerns seriously.
   B. We are in the process of hiring additional mental health counselors.
Part III: Guest Conversations

I. Dr. Lisa Adams
   A. Your note to the campus on Monday announced our first cluster. Even with these positive cases, our numbers remain low. Since these students are now in isolation, can you explain what this means?
      1. Isolation is the practice of separating someone who is ill from those who are healthy.
      2. Isolation at Dartmouth means students moving into our designated spaces, where they will receive meals and access to single-use bathrooms.
      3. Students living both on- and off-campus have the option to isolate in Dartmouth’s designated spaces.

II. Antonia Altomare
   A. What does it mean to be the hospital epidemiologist?
      1. In a hospital, the utmost priority is to protect the health of patients and employees at the hospital. The epidemiologist works to prevent the spread of any disease within the hospital.
   B. What can you tell us about the spread of COVID-19 in New Hampshire? What indicators are you paying attention to?
      1. Like most areas in the U.S, cases are going up. Some of the things we track are cases, cases by population, hospitalizations, and percent positivity rate of tests being done.
      2. These help us evaluate our response and prevention strategies.
      3. Our current positive testing rate is 1.3%, higher than our 1% in the past few months.
   C. To what do you attribute the recent doubling of cases in Vermont and New Hampshire? Are there any additional measures that you would like to see the state or the region take in response?
      1. We think that this is a result of the increase in frequency of small gatherings. People have been good at avoiding large gatherings, but as a result have been gathering in small groups much more often, increasing the risk of transmission.
      2. The state could mandate masking. This would level the playing field in New Hampshire.

III. Julia Griffin
   A. Can you tell us about how cases in local schools came to light, and how the town is addressing them?
      1. These cases came up about one week ago. There have been four cases in our public school system.
      2. We work closely with the state department to facilitate contact tracing.
Part IV: Questions for the Guests

I. Dr. Lisa Adams
   A. Should we be concerned about community spread?
      1. We are seeing an increase in community transmission. This is a message to
don double-down on what we have been doing to protect ourselves throughout the spring
and summer.
      2. The increase in cases is something that was expected as seasons changed and we moved
from outdoor to indoor activities.
      3. Our system and process is working, and we are able to halt transmissions when cases
are detected.

II. Antonia Altomare
   A. What signs should we look for to know that we have actually turned the corner and things are
getting close to normal?
      1. The declining number of individuals hospitalized and the number of daily infections.
      2. How long is this going to go on? Well, this will not be an on-and-off process; it will be
slow and gradual.

III. Julia Griffin
   A. It appears that the town of Hanover and Dartmouth have different standards when it comes to
masking and such. How is the town aligned with Dartmouth, and how are you working
together to keep the community safe without making students feel like the town is out to get
them?
      1. We have been working closely with the college since early March, coordinating on our
public health approaches.
      2. Our governor has not made masking mandatory. So, individual towns have to make
their own regulations.
      3. We have been pleased by Dartmouth students’ compliance and initiative regarding
regulations.
   B. How are you addressing the potential for transmissions in restaurants open at full capacity?
      1. We are working on drive-thru options for the winter so residents don’t feel pressured
to dine in.

Notes by Robin Martinez ’23