Community Conversations with Provost Joseph Helble
Wednesday, December 9, 2020 — 3:30 PM EDT
Student Assembly Notes

Part I: Provost Helble Introduction
Dean of the College Kathryn Lively and COVID-19 Task Force Co-Chairs Lisa Adams and Josh Keniston will join today’s conversation.

I. Fall Term Operations
   A. In June, we stressed two objectives: protecting the health of the community, and prioritizing educational continuity for our students.
   B. Looking back today at the steep hill we have had to climb, we are happy to have limited the spread of the virus while keeping facilities open all term.
   C. To date, Dartmouth has conducted more than 57,500 COVID-19 tests. There have been 44 positives, for a positive testing rate of 0.076%
   D. For students living in the Upper Valley during winter break: testing will be conducted in Thompson Arena while Leverone is renovated from December 14th to December 31st.
   E. Now that we have reached the end of the term, we are able to release data about fall without jeopardizing the privacy of individual students on campus:
      1. We received just over 600 reports of possible violations related to COVID-19. All of these were looked into.
      2. 86 students lost campus privileges.
      3. 124 students were given warnings without removal.
      4. In 397 instances there was no action taken.

II. Winter Term Operations
   A. We will conduct COVID-19 tests twice a week for students living on-campus. We will also be conducting pre-arrival testing for students living on-campus, students living off-campus who are approved for winter term campus access, and for graduate students who are either new students or are returning to the Upper Valley after travel.
   B. Testing will be conducted in Leverone Field House.
   C. The Task Force reviewed feedback about fall term from students and parents. We have learned that:
      1. There were positive views of testing protocols.
      2. The members of the Class of 2024 felt as though they did not fully understand some of the restrictions on social gatherings, and the actions that may result in them losing campus privileges for the year.
      3. There are concerns that the process through which students lost campus access was so fast that some felt they had little opportunity to explain their individual situations.
   D. We are adjusting our approach:
1. Anyone who loses campus privileges for a violation related to COVID-19 will be asked to leave campus for two terms, not four. Therefore, members of the class of 2024 who lost campus privileges in the fall will be able to return to campus in the spring and rejoin their classmates.

2. To address concerns over the fast process through which students lost campus privileges, there will be an informal review process where students will be able to ask questions and to share their side of their story before final decisions are made. If students are able to prove that they were not where they were reported to be, or that they were not doing what they were reported to have done, they will not face any further action.

E. We are making adjustments to allow for greater social interaction:
   1. After arrival quarantine has ended, students will be allowed into residence halls other than their own — access, at least initially, will be limited to students who are allowed in by someone living in the building.
   2. We will be expanding access to large indoor spaces for informal use — more details will follow in the coming weeks.
   3. We will be simplifying the process for using Baker-Berry Library — there will be no need for reservations, as an occupancy-tracking system will be installed by the start of winter term.
   4. We will be providing extended opportunities for outdoor activities.
   5. The Dartmouth Skiway will be open, and we will have transportation for students on weekends.
   6. We will be grooming the golf course for cross-country skiing.
   7. We will be expanding Winter Carnival — more details will be released by the Office of Student Life as dates approach.
   8. We are working hard to expand ice skating. We plan to provide an additional rink in either the Green of near the Golf Course — details forthcoming within the next few weeks.
   9. We are working to expand outdoor Collis programming
   10. This is not an exhaustive list. We are interested in your suggestions and are establishing an email address for this purpose: WinterTermSuggestions2021@.dartmouth.edu

F. This winter will be different, but we can still embrace it and look for ways to make Dartmouth, Dartmouth.

III. Spring Term Operations
    A. We had previously announced the cancelling of all international off-campus programs. We have now concluded that we will also not offer any domestic programs this spring. Statistical models show that cases throughout the U.S will continue to rise well into March.

Part II: Questions from the Audience
I. What are the college’s plans to preserve the mental health of students this coming term?
   A. Mental health is one of the reasons we are putting in place many of the new measures this winter.
   B. We hear and acknowledge concerns over mental health, and are taking them very seriously.

II. Could it be that the restrictions in place are too strict with so few cases? Should there be an opening towards in-class instruction?
   A. In winter term, most classes are online or remote with an in-person element.
   B. We wanted our faculty to be in a position where they can make the decision in this restrictive environment to deliver the content in the ways they felt was best.
   C. We are encouraging more small-group, in-person elements this winter.

III. What can we learn from campuses like Cornell, who brought back a greater number of students and maintained low case numbers?
   A. Frequent surveillance testing matters. This is why we are doubling the number of weekly tests for students living on campus.

Part III: Guest Conversations

I. Dean Kathryn Lively
   A. Could you give us a few examples of how you sought student input and how that input shaped some of the outcomes, including those announced today?
      1. We received inputs from all vectors: one-on-one conversations, Student Assembly, emails.
      2. Student Assembly and a group of UGAs lobbied for a change in visitor-access policy. They thought about fall term restrictions of not only physical health, but mental health.
      3. We took three options for the revised visitor policy and gave it to the COVID-19 student advisory committee — they recommended the version that will be put in place. *(Note: Student Assembly, unfortunately, does not sit on this committee.)*
      4. Last term we had students who were not complying with the daily screening. We found out from students that the issue was that the deadline was set to 9:00AM — now, the deadline is set to a 24-hour rolling format, and compliance went through the roof.
   B. Can you tell some of what is expected from the Winter Carnival this year?
      1. For those who are ready to embrace the winter: ice skating, ice sculpting, snow-shoeing, etc. We welcome ideas at our suggestions email!

II. Dr. Lisa Adams
   A. Why were you comfortable compressing the quarantine period for students this winter?
      1. We were pleased to see that the CDC and the state of New Hampshire responded to new data on the length of effective quarantine.
2. The incubation period of the virus is still two weeks, but data shows that the vast majority of the infected develop symptoms by day ten, and the risk beyond that is quite low.
3. An improved version of quarantine is now available, and our students can expect to end their quarantine on day eight. Those who come in direct contact with a known positive case, however, will be required to go through a full two week quarantine.
4. We are following the state guidance.

B. There are exciting new developments that will help us coordinate student movement this term. Can you tell us more about this?
   1. Students will receive a mail-in test about one week before arrival.
   2. The first stop for students on the day of arrival will be Leverone.
   3. In addition to the PCR test, we will incorporate a new antigen test that returns results within 15-30 minutes—this will allow us to put anyone who is positive into isolation immediately.

III. Co-Chair Josh Keniston
A. You are making changes to the management of quarantine and isolation space. Can you tell us more about that?
   1. Quarantine and isolation is one of our key tools to limit the spread in campus.
   2. There are things we are doing to limit the number of people who are put into isolation while they wait for test results.
   3. We are making housing more comfortable, making sure rooms are stocked with food and drinks.
B. Can you tell us more about access to student belongings?
   1. Students living on campus will be able to start scheduling appointments to gather belongings after their first negative PCR test. We will be available to help those who need items on the day of arrival.

Part IV: Questions for the Guests

I. Dean Kathryn Lively
A. Once the pandemic is over, how are you thinking about promoting class bonding within the Class of 2024?
   1. We are thinking about a lot of different things. We are definitely waiting for the numbers to improve before making solid plans.
   2. We are surprised about how well the ‘24s were actually able to bond and create friendships this term.
   3. Being able to welcome them back this spring will give us more opportunities to help them connect further.
B. Will there be any programming or increased opportunity to interact with mental health counselors during winter term? Are there any extra efforts being made to support mental health?
   1. We have hired two new counselors.
   2. We are working with our Student Affairs Directors to provide training on suicide prevention and mental health.
   3. We encourage people to be proactive and take care of themselves and seek support whenever they need it.

II. Dr. Lisa Adams
   A. The state of New Hampshire has given up on contact tracing. Is Dartmouth still engaging in contact tracing?
      1. Yes, we are fortunate to have the ability to do so.
   B. Can you speak to what appears to be an increase in cases since students departed for winter break?
      1. We still have professional students living on campus, as well as employees. They continue to be tested.
      2. The uptick is likely due to Thanksgiving gatherings.

III. Co-Chair Josh Keniston
   A. Will there be more food options and expanded hours this term? Will students be able to eat together?
      1. The dining team is always looking for ways to improve food options.
      2. As for dining hours, it will depend on the course of the pandemic. Our hope is that we will be able to provide more options for students to dine together throughout campus, but we have to watch the data.
   B. When will the gym be open?
      1. It will be open for students in winter once they are off their quarantine. We are watching the latest guidelines and the course of the pandemic.
      2. The first priority is to make these spaces available as soon as we can, safely.

Notes by Robin Martinez ‘23