

Transparency in Reporting COVID-19 Cases on Campus

In February 2020, when COVID-19 was still only a threat instead of a daily reality, we began receiving daily coronavirus updates by email. With subject lines like "SPECIAL INSIDE CLEMSON: Clemson remains free of COVID-19 cases" they reassured us that our campus had no imminent threat of infection. The last such email came on March 20, when there were still no cases to report. In that same email, we were also informed by administration that, "As we move into modified operations beginning next week, we will cease sending daily updates and only communicate with the full campus community on an as-necessary basis."

Since then, there have been no direct notifications to faculty informing us of cases on campus. The Clemson University coronavirus website (<https://www.clemson.edu/coronavirus/>) makes no mention of confirmed cases. If it were not for news media monitoring the Athletic Department site, the Clemson family might not know of the 47 confirmed cases (so far) among our student-athlete population.

Although the U.S. Department of Education has absolved universities of tracking or reporting confirmed cases of COVID-19 on campuses [1], we call on Clemson University to join other campuses around the nation in following the spirit of the Clery Act to protect the wellbeing of the Clemson family and to allow Clemson community members to make informed choices.

The Clery Act does not apply solely to reporting crimes on campus. It also includes the requirement [Clery Act 668.46(e)(3)] that, "If there is an **immediate threat to the health or safety** of students or employees occurring on campus, as described in paragraph (g)(1) of this section, an institution **must follow its emergency notification procedures.**" Further guidance from the U.S. Department of Education clarifies the intent through examples, the first of which is, "outbreak of meningitis, norovirus, or **other serious illness.**" [2, Section 6-2]

Given the high risk of contagion and the potential for serious health risks including death, we request that Clemson use the Clery Act emergency alert system to provide daily or weekly updates to the Clemson family of the number of confirmed and suspected cases on campus. Doing so would go a long way towards increasing "transparency, communication and accountability" [3, Section I.D] and establishing trust in the administration's claims of prioritizing the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff.

Sincerely,

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References:

[1] Office of Postsecondary Education. (April 3, 2020). UPDATED Guidance for interruptions of study related to Coronavirus (COVID-19). Retrieved June 26, 2020 from <https://ifap.ed.gov/electronic-announcements/040320UPDATEDGuidanceInterruptStudyRelCOVID19>

[2] U.S. Department of Education. (2016). The Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting, 2016 Edition. Retrieved June 26, 2020 from <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/campus.html#handbook>

[3] Clemson University 2019-2020 Faculty Manual

<https://www.clemson.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/manual.html>