

To the NEC Community,

Together we face a challenge. Today the NEC website reports updated information on testing results for students who have arrived for living and/or learning on campus. With 689 test results, screening has identified five student cases who were asymptomatic when they arrived: four in Henniker and one in Manchester. Three of the five students have returned home, one is a commuter who will isolate at home, and one, who remains asymptomatic, is quarantined in Henniker. Each positive result concerns us, but the incidence rate is well within expectations and within our management ability. We are following the ill students closely and wish them a speedy recovery.

The results indicate that the five students arrived *after* being infected, but we must not let down our guard. Working with New Hampshire authorities, we have identified others who were in contact with the affected students and taken appropriate actions, including relocating students to different, more self-contained rooms. Staff who came in contact with the students will work from home until they can return safely.

As Vice President Lesperance cautioned last Saturday, “You must do your part by avoiding risky behaviors to protect yourself and others.” With the testing results, and with knowledge that some students have undertaken risky behaviors on and off campus in Henniker, we are **directing all students on the main campus to remain on campus**. Students who have received negative test results are encouraged to take full advantage of the campus, get outside, exercise, gather appropriately, wear masks, and practice social distancing. Students who have not yet received a negative result should remain in their residence until they receive their test results which will happen shortly. Commuters and those living off the main campus may also come to campus.

Manchester students may leave campus but are expected to adhere rigorously to social distancing guidelines and wear masks when outside their rooms. **Students on the main campus in Henniker, however, may not leave campus without permission from Student Affairs and should not under any circumstances participate in large gatherings on or off campus.** This restriction was implemented because of observed unsafe behavior. College staff will rigorously enforce this policy.

Bottom line: Don’t gather in large groups. “Partying” without masks has led to the spread of the virus at other colleges. We must prevent that from happening here. Please keep the Pilgrim’s Promise to be safe and increase the chances for a full semester on campus, with fewer restrictions as conditions stabilize.

As planned, remote classes begin tomorrow for two weeks. In-person classes will begin as scheduled on September 7, 2020. We will need to be flexible, however, as we see additional testing results, and, most importantly, how well we can work together to stay safe.

When I walked the Henniker and Manchester campuses during move-in – sporting my snazzy, logo mask – I saw joy radiating through face coverings, the poignant moments between parent and child. These are your moments. In this year of the virus, college, with all its promise and hope for the future, cannot be taken for granted: you are earning your time, your opportunity, through your courage in the face of an invisible enemy. I share your confidence. Let’s face the challenge squarely and safely, together.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michele Perkins
President
New England College