

WSU COVID-19 Town Hall – June 24

PHIL WEILER: Well, good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the sixth in our series of system-wide WSU COVID-19 town-hall meetings. My name is Phil Weiler. I'm vice president for Marketing And Communications. I'm going to serve as our moderator for the next hour.

I want to welcome everybody who is joining us from all of our campus locations across the state, from our research facilities and extension offices throughout the state of Washington, and I'm looking here on my side monitor at all the folks who are joining in and participating in the chat. We have folks from Austin, Texas; Mission Viejo, California; Poulsbo; Gilroy, California; Maui, Hawaii. The list goes on. So thanks, everybody for joining us.

I think this is going to be an important session for us today. I think we've got good information to share that some folks have been waiting for.

Before we get started, let me just do a quick explanation. Many of you were expecting us to start this at 2:30 this afternoon. The reason we pushed it back to 4:00 PM is that we received word yesterday that there was a possibility that Governor Jay Inslee was going to be holding a media availability at 3 o'clock today to talk about guidance for opening higher education in the state of Washington.

And it's important for us to have, in fact, some of the folks on this panel right now, as well as other staff members, listening into that to make sure that the guidance the governor was providing was consistent with the plans that we have in place. So that was the reason for the slight delay, but as I look, we've got about 1,500 people who've joined us already online, so I will go ahead and get started.

We're joined today by WSU president Kirk Schultz, by Mary Jo Gonzales, vice president for student affairs. Mary Jo is going to start off in a moment talking to us about housing, dining, and some of the public spaces on our campuses and what those will look like.

Next we'll have Bryan Slinker, interim provost and executive vice president. Bryan will talk to us about what the plans are for instruction in the fall.

That will be followed by Theresa Elliot-Cheslek. Theresa is our vice president for Human-Resource Services. And Theresa's going to talk a little bit about attestation for faculty and staff. She'll explain what that means, how it's going to work, and when it's going to start.

And then we'll finally introduce Pat Chun, our director of athletics. Pat's going to give us an update on student athletes returning to campus for voluntary workouts.

With the time remaining, of course, we'll address questions. We've received several questions in advance, as we have in each of our sessions. So we've got some great questions this time, so it'll be good to be able to tackle those.

In addition, as I mentioned, we do have the chat function working on YouTube. I can see people are very active on the chat. If you have questions, feel free to go ahead and post them in the chat. We have a whole crew of subject-matter experts who are monitoring the chat and are going to try and answer those questions live and in real time.

So with that, let me get started. We'll turn it over to Mary Jo Gonzales And Mary Jo, if you talk to us about housing and dining. Mary Jo, you're still on mute.

MARY JO GONZALES: This is what happens when you start taking a mask off and want to talk to folks. But I want to remind everybody that yesterday, the governor declared that we would be all wearing masks, and so we wanted to demonstrate that for you. We do want to thank you for your patience. I also want to do a special shout out to that Gilroy, California, person. This is a Hollister girl calling in saying, hi, we're excited to have you here back in Pullman.

Just an hour ago, Governor Inslee approved institutions of higher education to re-open and provided the information that we needed. I want to let you all know that we were not holding back information from you intentionally or purposefully. We just did not have a governor's approval. And now that we do, we can go ahead and share those plans with you.

I do want to give a shout-out to our Government Relations staff-- Colleen, Chris, and Glenda, who literally worked seven days a week to help us get here today. As a reminder, WSU never closed. We continue to have students living and eating with us, and nearly all of our services went online.

The most important message that we need for you to hear today is that fall 2020 will be different. It will not be what you are used to. One of the questions a student submitted is whether there will be big parties allowed. I think you all know the answer to that question, but I want to make sure that you do. It is no.

Another question that came up from our students is, could they travel home during Labor Day and go home every day and every weekend? We really prefer that you don't do that because we know that travel and transmission of this virus are connected. So the large, huge parties and gatherings are not the most important thing right now, and you're going to have to make a choice, Cougars. That's all of our faculty, staff, and students.

If you're not going to follow the rules and not do what you are asked to do or to do what is expected of you, you should consider other arrangements for your education for the fall. Our WSU Pullman residential campus would not be the place for you if you are unwilling to do the things like wearing a mask. Our Cougar community must come first.

The decisions that we make, like wearing a mask, keeping 6 feet apart, following the signage on the floor, washing our hands, and definitely not sharing a red cup is absolutely critical to the success of us remaining open.

We do have four other physical campuses-- Spokane, Everett, Tri Cities, Vancouver, as well as our global campus for you to attend. We are all cougars, and we all celebrate wearing crimson and gray every day.

All of our students on all of our campuses are going to be expected to adhere to a set of rules that we're going to be laying out for you today. You need to understand, again, that those decisions and all of our decisions will lead us, as an institution, and lead us, as an administration, to make different decisions. Our choices will be dictated by our actions.

Whitman County is in phase 3. Several of other campuses are in phase 2 Some are in phase 1. For us in Whitman County and the Pullman campus in particular, it means that there is nothing larger than 50 people. There are restrictions and occupancy limits on dining and housing. And if you've been to a restaurant lately, you know that our world does look different and how it frames.

We've been planning for months. And now that we have permission to open, let's talk about a few specifics. So some examples is we have students who, in the cub spine, for example, off the table, have events and activities that they sell tickets for. We will allow students to be at the table, but we will not be able to allow transactions or selling of items at this time.

There will be limits on in-person activities for student organizations, events, and gatherings. Things like overnight events, gaming weekends that we're all used to, some of the more big activities that we have on our campus will be limited. Sports clubs-- there likely will not be competitions, and there will be limited travel. We will still have student-employment opportunities on all of our campuses, so please know that we are here to support you.

If you're coming to WSU Pullman, you want to add to your packing list-- masks, hand wipes, hand sanitizers. Prepare to come to campus to take care of you, and your health, and your concerns about safety. There is no need to hoard toilet paper.

I also want to be abundantly clear-- we will not tolerate racially based treatment or stigmatization from COVID-19 or those who test positive. Tomorrow or Friday, all WSU students will receive communication from their division of student affairs about what to expect on each of their campuses. For those students on the WSU Pullman campus who have applied for or signed up for WSU-owned residence halls or apartments in Pullman, you will receive additional communication about the housing options and the plan. The reason why that information is delayed until next week is because we just received guidance on particular areas.

So I'd like to go specifically into some of those standards that we will be using and the WSU Pullman campus. Rob, would you mind sharing our first slide?

So in terms of WSU residence halls, we are going to honor the request of students who are concerned about returning to Pullman based on a medical status, a financial status, or their proximity to the Pullman campus. We have heard from a variety of students who are concerned

about their health status and want to make sure that we will be honoring that. There will be reduced occupancy, and we will have predominantly single-occupancy in all of our facilities.

We are also going to honor request of those students who asked to live together because they are lifelong friends are they're individuals who've been connected for quite some time. We should be prepared for a phased-in use, not an immediate use, of community spaces, such as kitchens, lounges, and study spaces. There will be increased cleaning of all of the touch points, like handles, elevators where the CDC gives us specific guidelines. And sanitizing stations will be available for resident use throughout the area.

There will be a prohibition on visitors and guests and limits to visitors and guests as outlined by the governor. Expectations would include that we would log some of that guest information. And it breaks my heart to say that move-in will also look very different. It is one of the times we get to welcome all of our Cougars to the university community, but due to COVID-19, we will not be able to do that. It will also be over an extended time. And again, those individuals living in the residential community will be receiving information next week about the details of that.

For our WSU-owned apartments and campuses, we do have apartments that range between two and four bedrooms. We will only allow one single student per bedroom or a family. Each apartment will be considered a household for CDC purposes.

And finally, for those of you who are concerned about off-campus housing, including our Greek community, we are collaborating currently with local landlords and property owners to discuss the expected public-health kind guidelines, as well as congregate housing guidelines that are provided by the CDC. We are also in communication with our landlords related to Greek community and housing corporations. There will be reduced occupancy in Greek housing due to some of the expected public-health guidelines that will be delivered shortly.

So we can go back to full screen. I know that you probably have many questions, and we'll go ahead and answer those as the time comes.

PHIL WEILER: Great. Thank you, Mary Jo. So Bryan, could you now spend some time and talk to us about what the current thinking is around how the fall semester is going to play out?

BRYAN SLINKER: Glad to do that, Phil. So I'll focus on the instruction piece of campus life in the fall in Pullman. Some of this will apply to our other campuses as well.

I would like to start by thanking Mary Jo for her wonderful lead-off here, and I want to echo the shared responsibility that we all have to keep each other safe. This is a critical disease situation we're in. We believe we can do what we're telling you safely, but everybody has a part in that safety. And the only way we can have campus life and instruction face-to-face is if we're safe.

So I just want to echo Mary Jo's plea to you that you come to campus to commit to keeping each other safe in all that we do, and that includes in the classroom. And so I'll go through what

we're thinking about what the face-to-face classes look like and which classes are likely to be face-to-face. So we will have a mixture of face-to-face classes and distance classes.

There's a variety of factors that will determine, typically, which ones [INAUDIBLE]. But the main controlling factor is due to physical-distancing limitations, keeping at least 6 feet apart, every classroom at WSU Pullman and the other campuses has been examined for what its capacity is to keep safe physical distancing and ingress and egress into the classroom safely.

The limit is 50 for gatherings, as Mary Jo noted. That carries through into instruction. Our classroom-seating capacities-- on the average classroom seating of our general university classrooms and/or other classroom inventory is reduced by about 2/3. So we only have about one third of normal capacity in any of our lecture rooms. So that means we have a reduced classroom inventory.

Everyone can count on the larger classes being distance. The smaller classes less than 50 will be [AUDIO OUT] reduced classroom inventory may constrain us. We also have faculty and staff who may be in a high-risk category and should not be in the classroom, even if the space is physically available. So some classes could be distance because it's not safe for the staff to be there in the room. And we also have certain classes that require specialized equipment.

So at the end of the day, [AUDIO OUT] classes will be those that are [AUDIO OUT]. 25 to 40 would be the largest classes. And that doesn't mean it's going to be restricted to those classes with an enrollment less than that, because some faculty are talking about creative strategies, where they can divide a class up and seat only a portion of it at any one time so that a larger class could still be face-to-face, with only some of the students seated in the classroom at any one time on a rotation. And the teaching method's designed so that that's effective teaching and creative.

So in the classroom, the instructor will be at least 12 feet away from the students. The students will be seated at least 6 feet apart in defined seating patterns. Students will not get to choose where they seat. The seats will be clearly demarcated which are available for sitting and which are not. For most classes, we likely will assign seating, actually, and I'll get back to the reason for that.

Controlling entry into and out of the classroom will be directed by signage. And the hallways, stairwells, doors will largely be one way. Many of you have been into retail establishments-- grocery stores and so on-- where there's one-way signs on the floor to remind you where to stand. You'll see that in our campus buildings, particularly the classroom buildings, where we will work very hard to keep people physically distanced as they enter and leave the classroom and transfer between classes.

Once they're in the classroom, there will be assigned seating. And that is all related to facilitating contact tracing because even though we are returning to campus with a commitment to keeping everybody safe, that doesn't mean we will not have a case of COVID-

19. And whatever testing strategies we adopt, whatever diagnostics are done, that has to be followed up with contact tracing. And the more we can facilitate contact tracing, the safer we can keep everyone from a biosecurity standpoint.

Contact tracing can be facilitated by staying 6 feet apart. If you're not a close contact, you don't have to be traced. So keeping that distance, wearing the masks is critical so that we can facilitate contact tracing and so that any one individual doesn't become a close contact that needs to think about quarantine.

The other aspect of assigned seating is that we know who sits next to each other if we do have to do contact tracing. So it's all designed for your safety.

The other thing we're changing-- we're still going to start in the classes on the hour. And we who've been at WSU a long time talk about Cougar time-- starting things at 10 minutes past the hour. Cougar time this year will be 15 minutes past the hour because we need a little more time between classes to allow orderly transition in and out of the classroom and time to disinfect between classes because we're not going to continually use classrooms without disinfecting in-between uses.

And so that's what the classroom looks like basically. Cannot tell you yet, other than the large classes will be distanced, which classes will be face-to-face-- require analysis of all the factors we talked about-- classroom inventory, faculty availability, and equipment, and other specialized needs for that classroom.

And just to emphasize, again, you will need to-- where you sit, orderly transitions-- there will be signs everywhere to remind us of the rules and also, to allow us one-way traffic patterns and so on to stay safe. So that's what the classroom looks like. And I can pause there, and we can return to other aspects of instruction as we need to and have time later in the town hall.

PHIL WEILER: [INAUDIBLE] I'd be curious to hear what you have to say about the actual schedule for the fall semester. I heard Mary Jo mention that we're going to be asking students not to be traveling home every weekend, that if they're on campus, particularly on the residential campus, if they're there, we want them to be able to stay there and not be traveling back and forth.

I know there's been some conversation about when we might end the face-to-face portion of instruction. Is there anything that you can add to that?

BRYAN SLINKER: Yes. We are planning to transition away from whatever face-to-face we're doing on the Pullman campus to distance after Thanksgiving so that we do not have a physical presence of students, by and large, in Pullman after Thanksgiving. There's multiple reasons for that. We're not going to shorten the semester. We're going to shift the mode of delivery.

There's two weeks of instruction after Thanksgiving and finals. We provide security reasons. We think it's not prudent to have many thousands of students leave and then come back for only two weeks of instruction, given the disease status. And we're coming into winter and the flu season at that time, and it would be better if we avoided complicating everybody's life with COVID-19 and flu together during those winter months.

We understand that-- Mary Jo can talk about this more-- but we understand that Pullman is that place some students live. And that doesn't mean you have to leave Pullman if this is the place for you to live. And whether it's on-campus housing or off-- if it's on-campus housing, as you know, many students stayed here-- Perhaps as many as 1,000 stayed here after spring break because we know this is the place for some of you to be. It's the safest place or the only place for some of you. But to facilitate controlling the disease and keeping everyone safe, we do not plan to return students after Thanksgiving break for face-to-face instruction.

PHIL WEILER: We've talked a little bit about housing. We've talked a little bit about what instruction is going to look like. Mary Jo, could you give us maybe a little taste of what student life is going to look like in the fall?

MARY JO GONZALES: Absolutely. And I do want to affirm what Bryan said, is that many students call Pullman their home. And so Rob, can you bring up a slide regarding other things? And this really is also connected to faculty and staff as well.

I'm not sure you all know, but I'm one of those early-morning gym folks, and I truly miss working out at the SRC. And so let's talk about WSU Pullman, and the new Coug experience, and how it's going to affect folks.

Our residential dining and food services will still be available. We're going to be opening with reduced capacities, wellness checks, physical distancing, and increased cleaning protocols. All of the dining facilities will be operational.

Know that menu options will look a little different. I won't be able to go and get necessarily all the food that I usually get at the [? Lighty ?] food cart, but we are hoping to have as much of the options as possible. The goal is to feed all of campus, including students, faculty, and staff who need it, and we will continue to do that in a variety of ways.

We are moving. And it's really important, if you haven't gotten WSU Get Food app, really important to do that, because what you can do is actually order your items and have it delivered, and they'll tell you when it's ready. I love that option, especially when I'm running from one place to the other.

We will be deploying, as the governor requested, no-touch payment options at our food-service locations. That's everything from swipe to tap, or to use your Get Food application, where you can actually charge it to your WSU account.

Our Cougs Feeding Cougs program and our food pantries will continue to be operational because we do know that students need that assistance. Many of our campuses are also using grocery reimbursement for students. And so that option should be available as well.

In terms of recreational facilities, faculty, staff, and students should expect to see reduced occupancy. Again, you do wellness checks, which may include temperature; physical distancing; and increased cleaning protocols. I'm, for example, planning to wear my mask all the way until I get to the treadmill. I'll take it off when I'm doing the treadmill, put it right back on as I'm walking out the door. That's important to protect those individuals who are with me and around me.

There will be some spaces where a reservation system is required so that we adhere to the occupancy limits. You all need to know that. And so for those of you who actively use the Compton union, the Chinook, are Cultural and Student Centers, as well as our event spaces and lounges, this will be different. And Bryan alluded to some of this about the classroom. There will be less places to sit. We will create these little clusters where people can study, but again, our goal is to minimize transmission of COVID-19, but also provide that welcoming environment.

We will continue to provide virtual programming, and we are planning for some in-person activities in very small capacities. So please know that if you're used to reserving space at our Compton Union or other places, that process will look very different than it has in the past.

I do want to let our Cougs here at WSU Pullman know that Cougar Health Services has remained open. I'm so excited about the HIPAA-compliant telehealth they've implemented, including telemedicine, telecounseling. Our students have been able to access those resources and will continue to do so in the fall. When you are here, we do ask that students call in first for appointments so that we can prepare for that.

Those are some of the things that we didn't mean to expect as a part of our new Coug experience. And Rob, I'll definitely answer any questions when we get to that time. Back to you, Phil.

PHIL WEILER: [INAUDIBLE] ...pass things over to the Theresa. I'd have you talk about attestation for faculty and staff. I have to admit, "attestation" was not a word I used in everyday conversation up until COVID-19, and now, it's a word that, I think, a lot of us have on the tips of our tongue. Could you explain to us what "attestation" means, what faculty and staff are going to be asked to do, how is it going to work, and when do the faculty and staff need to start attesting to their to their health condition?

THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: Hi. Hey, thanks, Phil. I appreciate it. Attestation for acting staff will be launched system-wide Monday, June 29. "Attestation" means you're acknowledging or confirming that-- what is written-- that you're confirming that you're agreeing to that. So if you're symptom-free, you're going to say yes, and then come on into work. And you only need

to complete the attestation if you're required to come into a WSU work location. If you're working from home or on a leave, there's no reason to fill out the attestation.

It'll be on your myWSU site. All employees have access to that. We have information on the HRS website as how to do that with step-by-step guides to walk you through that process. Communications have gone out this week, and so everyone can start attesting on Monday if they're required to come into WSU work location.

PHIL WEILER: Sounds good. So if we are having to come into the office, we need to attest starting on the 29th. Good to know. Thank you.

Next I'd like to introduce Pat Chun, our director of athletics. This is the first opportunity we've had to have Pat join us on the panel. I'm glad, Pat, to have you here.

I know that recently, we threw the Pac-12. We're allowed to have student athletes voluntarily come to campus to start workouts. Talk to us a little bit about what that means. I know there was quite an elaborate set of guidelines that the student athletes had to follow. Can you just kind of share with us what the status of that is?

PAT CHUN: Yeah, absolutely. And where we sit today, we currently have just about 125 student athletes back in Pullman that have been cleared medically that are participating in voluntary workouts. So I'd be remiss if I didn't thank President Schultz, Provost Slinker, Vice President Gonzales, and our Government Affairs team for really guiding us through a process, along with our conference, to get us to a place where we could really feel great about a safe and healthy environment that we could create, and then ultimately, steward for our student athletes.

So our approach to voluntary workouts has been very methodical, very measured. We've worked really hard to create a safe and healthy environment in all of our athletic facilities. All of our measures that we've built, really, are set up to take care of our student athletes, staff, and local community. And we recognize that Wittman County has been a really safe place, relative to what's going on in the rest of the country, and it's our job to help be great citizens within Whitman County.

So I just want to thank our student athletes, coaches, and staff as we talk through this, even the last week and a half. Everybody understands that we have that contribute to a healthy culture at Washington State, so you will see our student athletes wear masks on campus, even before the governor's mandate. You'll see them distancing, as they do workouts. So we are adhering to all the rules that we've put in place because we just understand how important it is for everybody that Washington State University remain safe.

So it's been great to have students back. I'm not going to kid you. Being in my office, walking by, saying hello, no high fives, no handshakes, no fist bumps, but just a hello and see how you're doing-- and there's just a different type of energy to have student athletes back.

I know there's a lot of questions about fall events here in Washington state, and we know how important it is for the campus experience to get to a volleyball game, a soccer game, and a football game. And I know this firsthand. I know, in all three of those venues, how important it is for our student athletes and coaches to have our students faculty, staff, and alums in the stands. It's measurable because it's no secret-- we believe we have the best home-field advantages, no matter what the sport is, in all the Pac-12.

So everyone knows. We've been working hard to develop a plan. We've been collaborating and have had open dialogue with the Seahawks, with the Mariners, with that other Pac-12 school residing in Mount Lake just to make sure that we have all the experts in our state talk about all the safety measures that we're going to implement.

It's been really beneficial as we talk about parking, and concessions, and restroom lines, and distancing, and seats. So whenever the time comes, we'll work with campus, we'll work with Wittman County, we'll work with our Government Affairs team. And whatever the appropriate number it is to have within all of our facilities, we will work to get to that number. But we're working toward that. We're working toward a plan and feel really good about all the work that's been done.

I have a question that-- actually, it's not one. We received questions from a number of international students, both today and in previous panel discussions, and I wanted to just address. For those international students who might be viewing this, I know this is a time of some uncertainty. Some folks have written in saying that the US Embassy in their country is not open, they haven't been able to get a visa yet, they're not sure what the fall is going to look like for them. And so justifiably, I think, folks have concerns.

I did, earlier today, recognizing that that was an issue that we need to look at, talked with our folks at International Programs and asked them, what is the best way for you, as a student, to get answers to your very specific questions? Because for example, some people wonder, could I go to take classes online in the fall and not have to travel to the US? The answer is, it really depends on your specific situation.

And so what our staff and International Programs suggest folks do is if you do have questions, please email them. I'm going to give you the email address now verbally. And I know that we have some subject-matter experts who are monitoring the chat. They'll put the address in the chat as well.

But that email address is ip.intlservices@wsu.edu-- so "IP" for "International Programs"-- ipintlservices@wsu.edu. Given the fact that, really, everybody's situation is going to be different, and it depends on whether you're a graduate student or a graduate student, it's difficult for us to give blanket recommendations on what to do with regard to the fall. So there are staff who are anxious to be able to help you directly answer your own individual questions.

Mary Jo, I'm going to ask you a question. I noticed this in the chat section. Several people have been asking about, what happens if a student becomes ill, and they're living in the residence hall? What about things like if they need to quarantine? Have you worked with your staff to give that some thought?

MARY JO GONZALES: Absolutely, Phil. Our teams-- and this includes folks from our Environmental Health and Safety, our Department of Public Health for Whitman County, and a variety of others-- to build an isolation plan and a quarantine plan.

And an isolation and quarantine are two different things. For those, it means that we know that there are students who are maybe exposed to the virus elsewhere, and so they will need to isolate in order to protect their health and the health of others. "Quarantine" means you've actually tested positive. And that's a very different strategy and structure. And so I want to let you know that we have plans for both, including residential facilities

I do want to be clear that those services will only be provided to individuals who live in our residential facility. So if you are living off campus, you really need to think about what your plan will be if you should either need to isolate or quarantine. And the reason why that's important-- this is a part of a personal-safety plan-- and I want to make sure that you all understand, as a part of our responsibility living in a community, is that we need to think about what those personal-safety plans are. For those who are living with us in residential facilities, we will work to provide meals for them. We will make sure that they have all that they need to be able to be successful.

I did read a question, Phil, where a parent asked if they could bring their child-- or sorry-- we don't call 18-year-olds "children"-- their student home-- because I call my daughter my "child," so that's why I was using that terminology-- but bring their student home. And again, those will be choices that you as a family need to make.

But we are providing that. We do know that students are coming from all over the country, all over the world, and we want to be able to provide those services. But again, you need to make sure that you are bringing what you need to take care of you. Personal responsibility in this process is absolutely critical, and we are living in a pandemic, and it means that we all need to do things differently. And planning for how you're going to manage this personally is absolutely a critical part of this process.

PHIL WEILER: Bryan, a number of questions that we received in advance, and I'm also seen in the chat section right now, have to do with the question of testing. And I know that there's a difference between testing somebody who may potentially be ill versus surveillance-style testing. Can you give us an idea of what the difference between those are and in what direction we're looking at as far as what the testing plan might entail?

BRYAN SLINKER: Glad to do so, Phil. So, and when we talk about testing, there's testing for the virus, and there's testing for antibody. And largely, we're talking testing for virus, although on campus, we will have the ability to test for both, depending on circumstance.

Diagnostic testing is if you are showing respiratory-disease symptoms or other signs associated, typically with COVID-19, you would be tested to see if you have the virus. So that's a diagnostic test for you, as an individual, to help your physician guide your medical care. It would be reported to public-health authorities so we can monitor positives and negatives. And if positive, it leads into contact tracing, and isolation, and/or quarantine as needed.

The other type of testing in a public-health-pandemic response is surveillance testing-- active surveillance, meaning that the testing is not necessarily done for you as an individual, even though individuals have to agree to be tested. It's to monitor the disease in the population in our community.

We are in phase 3 in Whitman County, as Vice President Gonzales noted. We are there because we have a low prevalence of disease. And we want to keep it low when we return a lot of our students to campus. So we're looking at a variety of strategies where active surveillance might be a part of that strategy to help keep disease prevalence low and keep it from spreading in our community.

So we find it, and then we contact trace and quarantine, and keep it at bay. Active surveillance testing could be a part of that strategy to help us do that, to monitor how we're doing. We've described a lot of the biosafety measures we're going to take-- physical distancing, masks, attestations, many, many things. We need a way to monitor whether we're being successful in implementing those measures, and that's another role for active surveillance.

The four disease modelers that we have on our faculty-- two from Spokane, two from Pullman-- are nearing their recommendations for our options if we do implement active testing. And we will roll out more information on that over the next month as we get more ability to refine those strategies.

Testing-turnaround time is going to be quick. Cougar Health is gearing up to be able to handle any testing needed for our students diagnostically. And so we're prepared with our on-campus testing to support our community for diagnosis and testing. And as we adopt active-surveillance strategies, we have the capacity to support that testing too because that would add a significant number of tests to what we need to do.

Our diagnostic lab is gearing up to buy-- middle of July, they will be able to perform about 7,500 tests a week. And so in collaboration with Cougar Health and a human pathology-lab partner, we're able to sample as we need to and get testing done for both individual diagnoses, and if we adopt them, active-surveillance strategies.

PHIL WEILER: [INAUDIBLE] I appreciate you mentioning. One is, I think, Washington State University is really fortunate to have researchers who've made their life's work focused on how to model disease spread. And so for us to be able to use that expertise to put together the plan that makes most sense for us-- we're very fortunate. Not every university has those kinds of resources, has those experts on their campus.

The other thing that I think is worth mentioning also, is you did reference the fact that we have a diagnostic lab that is on our Pullman campus that we're going to be able to take advantage of so that we'll be able to process our own samples-- so two things that are definitely working in our favor. So thanks for mentioning that.

Theresa, I'd like to turn to you. This is a question that we have received a lot of interest in from faculty and staff, particularly because there was an announcement made by the governor recently. I'm going to read this question. This is one of those questions that was submitted in advance.

The question reads, in the June 17 announcement regarding state-employee furloughs and wage freezes, the governor said that he is urging agencies that are not under his direct authority, including higher-education institutions, to adopt furloughs. The governor did impose furloughs on those agencies that report to him directly, and he was asking other state agencies, including state public higher-education institutions to look at furloughs.

I know it's a little early for us to talk about it, but I think this is a real concern for staff members. Can you tell us a little bit about where that question of furloughs currently stands?

THERESA ELLIOT-CHESEK: Sure. Furloughs are one of the options being considered with the budget scenarios. No decisions have been made yet. If furloughs are implemented, employees will receive appropriate notice and timelines and information regarding what process the furloughs for their employee type. But again, nothing for WCU-- a decision has not been made as to if employees will be taking furloughs or not. And if that decision is made, we'll have lots of communication coming out for all employee types as to those processes, the details regarding those. And I don't have Kirk wants to jump in on this at all, but I'll turn it over to him.

KIRK SCHULTZ: Thank you, Theresa, and thank you, Phil. We get this question a lot from our employees across the whole WSU system, just wanting to know, as they read things out there, that uncertainty of what's going to happen with our budget. We continue to work with our leaders, with our vice presidents, with chancellors, with deans, and others about how we're going to meet the \$37 million goal that we have to meet as a WSU system.

We fully expect to have a communication out to the broader WSU community on July 15 that will detail exactly what we're proposing to do, whether that is the use of furloughs, or what we'll do with salaries, well what sort of cuts are going to be out there. And so it's still an active process.

But people can put an X on the calendar. That's a Wednesday in the middle of the week. We want to make sure, at that particular point, that we have that communication. We have plenty of time for people ask questions, to try and understand what it is that we're trying to do.

And I think almost everybody knows that there's no great solutions when you have to cut as much as we have to. We're going to do the best we can to minimize the impact on our students and maximize the number of people that still will be employed by WSU. Those are two of our core principles. And so stay tuned is the bottom line, and look for some communications coming out on the 15th.

PHIL WEILER: Kirk, I'm glad that you mentioned that \$37.2 million reduction. For those who don't know, the governor has instructed WSU to reduce our next-year's budget by that amount-- \$37.2 million. So this will be a period of some real tight financial constraints for us moving forward.

As the president mentioned, the number-one priority is to make sure that the student experience is not impacted by those, but that is going to mean that there'll be cuts in other places. So faculty and staff members-- I know that there will be a number of communications coming out over the next couple of weeks that talk about this, so I'd encourage you to stay tuned. Kirk, did you have something else to add?

KIRK SCHULTZ: Yeah. Let me just emphasize that we can't go from having a program that cost \$100 to something that cost \$90 that is exactly the same. And we have been in an environment for a long time of continuing to ask our faculty staff to do more with less. And we're going to minimize the impact on students, but there are clearly going to be longer times for things, or fewer people to help support in certain areas. And we're going to do the best we can to keep that at a minimum, but I just want everybody to acknowledge that if you see that kind of a cut, it means there are things that we can't do the way that we would like to.

Our folks have done a great job over the last decade dealing with this, rolling up their sleeves, and doing a fantastic job for the Cougar experience. But there will be some times when things are going to be a little slower. May not have the support, in terms of the number of people that people are used to seeing, and we're just going to do our darndest to make sure it's as good an experience as it can be.

PHIL WEILER: Thank you, Kirk. Before we move on, there's another piece to this question, I think, about furloughs and state mandates around compensation and the like. And that has to do with a state decision to provide a 3% salary increase for our classified staff. So Theresa, can you give us a little bit about that history and what our classified employees can expect?

THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: For Washington State and classified staff, they will see a 3% salary increase effective out July 1. So the governor's directive to the state agencies did not impact WSU. So classified staff will see that 3% increase July 1.

PHIL WEILER: [INAUDIBLE] about this previously about our hopes for fall sports. I know that you're not making those decisions in isolation. Can you tell us about some of the conversations that have been taking place, whether it's at the Pac-12 level, or the NCAA level, or for that matter, with some of the professional sports teams here in the state?

PAT CHUN: Yeah, absolutely. Our conference has done a really exceptional job since March, in terms of building communication lines, building committees. So when you go across the board, whether it's getting football back to practice, what it will take for us to build up to a football season-- and the NCAA approved a six-week model, which was heavily built by what the Pac-12 had put forward, and even to a point where we have our external directors meeting, talking about what the game experience could look like, how that impacts students, band, cheer. So every base is really being covered now from a conference level.

The good thing, as a conference-- we're proud to be a member of the Pac-12. All the members are collegial. Everyone understands what's at stake. And then like I mentioned earlier, it's been really wonderful to be part of a community like the state of Washington, where all the experts are willing to work together because they understand how important sports are to the state. And we also understand that we have a responsibility to build safe environments.

So like I said earlier, we're working on plans. We will get there. But the expertise from the Pac-12, from the medical people, from within the state, and really, the expertise we have on our campus-- everything we've done here has been done collaboratively, communicatively. The people you see on the screen here have a tremendous amount of impact on every decision we make relative to health and safety.

So we're a part of a bigger picture here. We understand what our role is, but we also know how important bringing athletics back, but in a healthy, safe manner for our student athletes, for our students, faculty, and staff, is a priority.

PHIL WEILER: Thanks, Pat. One thing you said resonates with me. I was having a conversation with a reporter, actually. And this reporter was asking about how universities are making these decisions. And one thing I really felt compelled to mention is that I think universities have always been very collegial. They've always been willing to share information. But with the advent of COVID-19, I think we are seeing that even more.

So whether it's in athletics, or academics, or student life, there's a lot of conversation that's taking place, both internally at WSU, and with all of our partners in the Pac-12, our partners, other higher educational institutions in the state of Washington and nationally. So one of the things, I think, people are starting to see is that some institutions are coalescing around ideas. And part of that, I think, is because we are all very actively sharing best practices, making sure that we are sharing what the thoughts are, the thinking is so that everyone can make the best decisions for their own individual universities and campuses.

I'd like to go back to Mary Jo. This was a question that I saw, again, in the live chat. There was a question about our freshmen live-in requirement. Can you, first of all, explain what that is, why we ask freshmen to live on campus, and what happens, given the fact that we're going to be likely having many single-occupancy rooms? We may have students who have compromised health conditions. How does that all come into play with the freshmen live-in requirement?

MARY JO GONZALES: So it is actually, the first-year live-in requirement. So what it is is all students who are coming to WSU for the first time-- we ask that you stay with us for two semesters on the Pullman campus. This is our residential campus.

And part of why we do that is we try to explain, in a very broad sense, that living in the community and learning the standards and the rules that we have in our community are absolutely important for students to know. Residential students have, typically, higher retention rates, higher graduation rates, and higher student-success rates. And so that is why.

You also build a community. For some students who are-- and I just was talking about a student from Colton who doesn't have-- came from a very small class and is wanting to come to Pullman all the way from a student in Texas or California-- or my Hawaii Cougs-- aloha to you all. We see you, and we miss you. But those students are coming from different places, and so part of it is helping you to find your community.

So what we are doing-- and again, students will hear about this next week-- is we are going to explain what our decisions are, what the occupancy will be, and where that student fits in that. Some students will automatically be waived. There are criteria around financial and medical. We know some of our students have families for whom are immunocompromised, and they do not want to come to campus because they're concerned about spreading that to their families. And so we will be considering those options, as well as special circumstances. So next week, all students who have, again, applied for, or have signed up for contracts with us here at WSU in Pullman housing, university-owned housing-- you'll hear more information next week.

PHIL WEILER: Terrific. Thank you, Mary Jo.

Bryan, we touched on this a little bit, but this was a question that I had flagged as I was looking at some of the pre-submitted questions. And there's many variations of this, and it's probably worth just repeating. I'm going to read the question, and if you could then share your thoughts.

This person says, "I'm graduating next semester, and I'm very concerned and uncomfortable about returning to campus. For those students who are uncomfortable about returning to campus, what options exist to be able to continue their fall-semester learning"?

BRYAN SLINKER: So some courses, of course, will be distance, and so that will work. For those courses that are face-to-face that a student may not wish to move to campus or a community to attend face-to-face, many of them will be also available at a distance. And whether exactly what that looks like, whether it's synchronous or asynchronous-- but we understand that

there's a lot of students who want to engage as Cougs-- and we want you to engage as Cougs-- that, for health reasons or other concerns, may wish not to return to the community.

And then I also want to point out that our global campus is a fantastic resource as well. Yes, it's not face-to-face, but it has a long history of providing exceptional education in a distance format online. And so our online university and the global campus has many courses. And between those courses that are face-to-face that are also accessible by distance-- those courses that are distance, no matter what, in our global campus, we feel like we can accommodate almost any student's interest in staying engaged as a Cougar.

And I know from discussions with faculty, the associate deans for instruction in the colleges, the deans, as they did in the spring, our Cougar faculty will be there to help support students and find custom solutions where they can. With \$31,500 students in our system, it may not be possible to find every custom solution, but once you know the willingness is there, it's part of the Cougar family to try to make this work for as many Cougs as possible.

PHIL WEILER: The other thing I might suggest, too, if a student isn't sure what he or she wants to do in the fall, you might reach out to your academic advisor. I think that is always, always a good place to start. If you have questions about making progress academically, if you have questions about class schedules and the like, schedule a time to speak with an academic advisor. And chances are, you're going to get even more of the resources than you knew might have existed because obviously, those folks are there specifically to make sure that you, as students, are successful.

We are getting close to time. I'm going to ask just a couple more questions, then, I think, we're going to need to wrap up. One thing though, I do have a question for Theresa, if we could. Theresa, this was something that someone had posted in advance, and it's similar to the last question I asked about the student.

This was from a staff-person's perspective. This person has been working remotely now since March, and it's been working fine. They're wondering, would they be able to continue to do that during the fall semester, if they either have some kind of a medical condition that would prevent them from being able to be on campus, or if they're caring for elderly parents or the like? What are the thoughts about continuing that the ability to do telework for staff people?

THERESA ELLIOT-CHESLEK: The short answer is yes to all of those, that they will be able to continue to work from home. That's the number-one option when people are putting through their plans for return to work at WSU is the employees who can work from home be allowed to work from home.

Secondly, employees will still have the options to go through our Disability Services office for a variety of leaves, including caring for family members who are ill or are caring from themselves. So those options will still continue through the fall. And so employees should feel comfortable being able to work from home.

If there are concerns, we do have a Concerns form on our website-- anything related to COVID-19 concerns an employee might have regarding coming back into the workplace or not coming into the workplace. And that helps us try to address and resolve those issues. So again, the answer is yes, that should be available to all employees in the fall.

PHIL WEILER: Terrific. Thank you, Theresa. Mary Jo, I know that we have students on this particular town hall, but my understanding is we're going to be offering a special town hall just for students. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

MARY JO GONZALES: Absolutely. But first, I'd like to say hello from my lamp. I hear that they're active on YouTube. She says hello.

We will be having a town hall where all campuses are represented in early August. You'll be receiving notification of that. We think it's really important that students have an opportunity to come together and ask the questions that they might have and bring all of the efforts of from all of our campuses to explain some of those-- the ways that we're going to navigate and the ways that we're going to engage with you in the fall I think, is really important. So you'll be receiving notice of that, and there will be a lot more details at that town hall in early August. We'll get that date out probably within the next two weeks.

PHIL WEILER: All right, Mary Jo, your lamp is trending in the comments section. Who knew?

MARY JO GONZALES: I love my lamp.

PHIL WEILER: We are getting very close to the end of the hour. I'd like to turn it over to President Schulz and see if you have any parting comments for us.

KIRK SCHULTZ: I do, Phil. And first, let me thank all my colleagues here for the great job that they're doing. Mary Jo and her team is going to make sure that we have this great Coug experience, whether it's Pullman or any of our campus locations. It's going to be different, but it's going to be great. And people are working really, really hard to keep our students safe when they return.

Bryan and his team have been working on the academic calendar, and classrooms, and things like that. Theresa has been working to make sure our employees feel safe and that we're keeping communications open. And as we bring people back, we're learning what we can do and what we can do better.

Pat's getting us ready in a very uncertain environment for what our fall sports might look like, not just from a spectator, but making sure our student athletes are safe, and they're put not in a disadvantaged environment because of me as a fan wanting to see them. We just really got to make sure to be careful and do that well.

I want to talk about masks for a minute. Mary Jo mentioned this. Bryan mentioned this. Masks are not about personal freedom. The masks are not about whether you're republican, or democrat, or which way you lean. Masks are about keeping you safe and keeping the people around you safe.

It fogs my glasses. Sometimes it's itchy on my face. But at the same time, we've got to look past those things.

And if I'm at an event, and somebody's not wearing one, I need to walk up to them and say hey, we need you to do this. And it's going to be that personal responsibility and peer pressure, whether it's a faculty member, a staff member, a student, a townspeople, that we're going to have to do to make this successful.

I hear a lot of things that people go hey, I've seen this generation of students. They're not going to abide by this. Nobody's going to wear masks. They're not going to take it seriously.

I believe that our students coming back are going to do a great job. And I think we have to have that confidence. Doesn't mean we're not prepared, but I have confidence that we're going to be able to do this, and we're going to be able to do it well. And I know our students are going to prove to everybody that they can come back in a safe environment and be part of the Cougar nation.

The other thing I want to mention is I know some folks say well, gee, on those weekends, I'm used to going back to Seattle because that's where my friends are, and that sort of stuff to do is. Let me tell you, weekends in the Palouse are fantastic. There's great things to do here, terrific restaurants to go to eat, places to go hiking.

I could ask each of the folks on this screen here to describe some of their favorite weekend activities, and there's lots of things to do here. So people need to not think that not traveling over those weekends somehow means that they're not going to have a great experience and lots of things to do.

So Cougs, thank you. We appreciate parents being here. We appreciate perspective students, current students, faculty and staff, alumni, and interested people. We're going to do everything we can to make sure you have a great experience this fall, that you're safe, and that we're doing everything we can to ensure that once a Cougar, always a Cougar, and Cougs take care of Cougs. Thank you.

PHIL WEILER: Thank you, President Schultz. A quick reminder for everybody-- if you're wondering, where do I go to get the latest information about WSU's response to COVID-19, we have a very robust WSU COVID-19 website. In fact, there is the address right there on the screen.

We are actually doing our third overhaul of that site. And so within the next week or so, it's going to have a different look and feel, and it's going to be much more oriented toward, if I'm a student, what information do I need, if I'm a faculty member, if I'm a staff member? So we are moving from just providing information to really trying to provide information for each audience so people know exactly what it is that they should expect in the fall.

So with that, first of all, I want to thank our subject-matter experts who have been answering questions on the chat section. It has been a very lively chat this time around-- a lot of very good questions. Thank you to the folks who submitted the questions today and, also, in advance.

I'd also like to thank our panelists. I appreciate you all sharing information with us. I think it's helpful for us to be able to do this on a regular basis and to be able to hear from senior leaders about what the expectations are for the fall.

So with that, thank you all for joining us. Have a great day. And go, Cougs.

Go, Cougs.

Go Cougs.