MEMORANDUM

TO: ECU Faculty and Staff
FROM: Ron Mitchelson, Interim Chancellor
DATE: August 18, 2020
SUBJ: COVID Update

Good morning colleagues,

As you might have seen in the news, UNC Chapel Hill announced Monday afternoon that they are moving undergraduate courses to online beginning Wednesday, Aug. 19, in response to outbreaks of COVID-19 in Chapel Hill over the past several days.

Following guidance from the UNC System, ECU and other System institutions will proceed as planned with on-campus instruction.

As we move into our second week of classes, I want to thank you for helping to set an example for our student Pirates by wearing masks and staying physically distant while continuing to provide our students with access to excellence and opportunity.

I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again: we achieve our mission — student and regional success — at much higher levels when we can operate in-person. Being face to face enhances engagement, which is critical for our students.

Like many of you, I continue to monitor the key COVID-19 metrics at all scales, including the local data. We are watching the situation on our campus daily, and the campus COVID-19 dashboard has been updated. The cumulative COVID-19 totals reported to ECU from students as of Aug. 16 include 1,458 tests, 108 positive tests, with a 7.4% positive test rate. Seventy-nine of these students are classified as recovered. As of the Aug. 16 report, 17 employees have tested positive and 13 have recovered. In total, the past two weeks have averaged about 30 new cases per week. Thus far, we are relatively successful in flattening the curve.

Last Wednesday we tested 165 students with 5 positive results (about 3%). The low number of positives gave me hope that everyone was doing their part. But then, the weekend comes and we see a small but visible fraction of our total student body scare us and the community with parties that are too large, too dense, unmasked, and irresponsible. While we had no party nearly as large as that reported in week one, we still had two dozen parties over the past weekend to which ECU Police and Greenville Police responded. Please note that after an intense educational campaign, we have turned up the “heat” on these gatherings and there are consequences for this behavior. We all know that we bring students to a campus to be social but some of them must show more restraint and we all need to practice patience. I end by reminding us all that COVID-19 is the adversary and the vast majority of ECU students join us in defeating it. They are compliant.

Please join me in remaining safe and in reinforcing the need for responsible behavior. Practice the 3 Ws — Wash hands, Wait 6 feet, Wear your mask! We have said it all along, our success in returning will be in direct proportion to our compliance with community expectations. Flatten the curve at ECU!!