

August 24, 2020. Original document [here](#).

FROM: The Provost
SUBJECT: Notifications of Positive COVID-19 Test Status

In recent weeks, we have received requests from faculty who would like to be automatically notified in the event that a student in one of their classes tests positive for COVID-19. We have spent a great deal of time considering this request, reviewing the relevant data, looking at best practices at other institutions, reviewing privacy law, and considering what is best for maintaining the illusion that in-person classes are in no way a safety risk.

We have decided to pretend that these faculty were seeking the names of students who test positive, so we can scold them for their lack of concern for student privacy. As we all know, informing a faculty member that someone in their class of 20+ students has tested positive for COVID-19 clearly means singling out Bobby Jefferson.

More importantly, our quarantine housing capacity would be completely overwhelmed and in-person classes shut down immediately for lack of non-quarantined students if we treated classmates as close contacts. This might throw into question the wisdom of our decision to hold in-person classes at all. We have therefore determined that absence* of conclusive evidence for indoor transmission of COVID-19 at a distance of greater than 6 ft is conclusive evidence of absence.

It is clear from this comprehensive review that the health of our community – faculty, staff, and students – is best served by ensuring the strict privacy of everyone's test status. We will therefore continue to publish only University-wide testing data through our public dashboard so that your sense of dread and anxiety may remain generalized rather than specific. We discourage you from documenting changes to your students' background scenery on Zoom in an attempt to guess if any of your students has been ordered to self-isolate.

I know this decision will be a disappointment to some of you, but I hope that you understand that we have made this decision with the ultimate goal of keeping all faculty, staff, and students from second-guessing the administration. Because we might be held liable if we were to knowingly endanger you, we have decided ignorance is by far the best policy, both for us and for you.

Please enjoy this semester at our institution of higher learning free from the burden of excessive knowledge.

* We have chosen here to ignore the examples of the Skagit Valley Chorale rehearsal in Washington State, the restaurant in Guangzhou, and most recently the Starbucks in Paju, South Korea due to the fact that no one in these cases was wearing masks. We point out, furthermore, that the masked employees in South Korea did not contract COVID-19, thus proving that our mask requirement will be sufficient and effective.**

** We have chosen here to ignore the fact that these employees were wearing the equivalent of the N95 masks we have refused either to mandate or provide.