

## Mayor's Update

I am gravely concerned about the transmission of COVID-19 at Boston College.

Commissioner of Health and Human Services (HHS) Deborah Youngblood, our HHS team and I have been meeting with Boston College for many weeks, including prior to their fall opening. We strongly encouraged strict adherence to public health guidelines.



Boston College community members are integrally connected with Newton— they live, shop, dine & drink, play sports, work and recreate amongst our community. When COVID-19 spikes within the Boston College community, this impacts all of us in Newton.

Today we convened a meeting with Boston College along with our partners in Boston's Public Health Commission, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Commonwealth's Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders.

We let Boston College's administration know our expectations for immediate action given the outbreak. BC has had 104 positive cases since they re-opened a few weeks ago.

First, we requested that the oversight of positive case investigations and contact tracing be transferred to the City of Newton's Health and Human Services Department (HHS) for students who reside in Newton, both on and off campus. Newton's HHS staff will continue working with our State partners at the Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) for case investigations and contact tracing. While BC set up a robust system for case investigations internally, the CTC's capacity, experience and comprehensive approach is needed at this juncture. This will ensure that Newton has timely and transparent information on each individual positive person. This enables us to more quickly identify clusters and the source and extent of the transmission of the virus. The Boston Public Health Commission is also making this change for students who reside in Boston. Our State partners fully support this request. BC has agreed to make this change.

Second, we requested that BC increase their testing. Boston College administrators said that they tested approximately 4,600 people two weeks ago and another 2,900 last week. Next week, they intend to test between 3,000 to 4,000 BC community members. We additionally asked that they begin providing a daily number of all tests administered and a calculated positivity rate to help us effectively track the virus within their college community. In the coming days, we will be continuing to focus on their testing protocols. This will include situations in which multiple people test positive in a dorm within the 14-day incubation period of the virus. We continue to recommend that Boston College adjust their testing practices and increase the number.

Third, I let Boston College administrators know that I do not support the addition of any isolation or quarantine facilities for students in any off-campus Newton locations (e.g., leasing space in a local hotel). BC should provide the quarantine and isolation facilities required for all on and off campus students on their own campus properties. In particular, adding this service for off-campus students is important for containing viral spread. Boston College is almost out of space in the facilities they designated in their operational plan, which is only for their on-campus students who need quarantining and isolating. While BC is looking to set up additional sites potentially in Brookline, Dover, Cohasset and Newton, an alternative may be reducing the number of in-person students.

If Boston College does reduce its in-person student population, I strongly urge they do so with careful adherence to public health principles to avoid spread of the infection to other locales.

Newton values our Boston College neighbor and considers the many faculty and students a positive part of our community. As an integral part of Newton and Greater Boston, Boston College must re-consider their original operational plan.

Boston College must take swift, decisive and effective action now to contain the spread of this serious infectious disease. The data on the spike in positive Boston College cases demonstrates viral transmission. They must act now to protect the health of their BC community and all our Newtonians. They must act now so Newton's low positivity rate does not rise. Boston College must act now to ensure that their operations do not threaten our ability to begin to reopen Newton schools in-person, to get our residents back to work, and our restaurants, retailers and other businesses back on their feet.

We have learned COVID-19 moves quickly and we have to move even quicker to stay ahead of it.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

