

THE FORUM

Westminster prepares new campus guidelines under governor's state of emergency

Brendan Sudberry, November 9, 2020

Gov. Gary Herbert declared a new state of emergency Sunday night in response to growing cases of COVID-19 throughout the state of Utah.

COVID-19 cases have risen substantially over the past week, reaching an all-time high of 2,987 cases reported Friday, according to the Utah Department of Health. The last single-day record was reported the day before with 2,807 cases Thursday.



The newly-announced directives included in the governor's announcement went into effect 1 p.m. Monday. These include:

- Statewide mask mandate in all public areas, including when one is within six-feet of individuals outside a household group.
- Businesses must enforce mask-wearing by all employees and contractors while encouraging patrons to do the same.
 - Companies must post signage reflecting requirements.
 - Any business found in violation will be subject to fines.
- All social gatherings are limited to members of immediate households until Nov. 23 – three days before Thanksgiving.
 - This does not include gatherings for a primarily educational or religious purpose
- Youth and high school extracurricular activities are postponed, with the exception of sporting events and practices associated with high school championships, with social distancing enforced.

- This does not limit intercollegiate sports that currently follow safety guidelines.
- All students at public and private colleges and universities will be required to be tested weekly for COVID-19.

Although the state of emergency is set to expire Nov. 21, both the statewide mask mandate and student testing will extend beyond this into “the foreseeable future,” according to Gov. Herbert.

Testing at Westminster College will remain the same through the remainder of the year, according to Bri Buckley, director of campus safety. This includes tests for student-athletes, residential students, employees who are required to be tested and any other student who requests a test.

Buckley said the mandatory weekly testing outlined under the governor’s order will begin Jan. 1, 2021.

“[T]he college was already requiring masks and social distancing on campus and encouraging the college community to do so off-campus as well,” Buckley said in an email to The Forum. “The college expects our community to follow the new state restrictions that apply off-campus now.”

Buckley said the college will incorporate the governor’s new guidelines into the operational plan for the Spring semester.

“Details on expanded testing of students will be announced once that process and timing is finalized,” Buckley said.

This includes a strategy for accommodating testing of all students, according to Bill Self, nurse practitioner for Student Health Services.

In preparation for pushback against this order and its subsequent guidelines, Gov. Herbert emphasized the need for civility over individual liberty.

“There is no legislation or executive order that can mandate civility, respect and basic consideration for others,” Gov. Herbert said in his Sunday night address to the state. “This is about so much more than just mandates. This is about personal responsibility.”

Brooklyn Covington, junior communication major at Westminster, said she is relieved the governor is putting these new guidelines in place.

“It seems like this should have happened four months ago,” Covington said. “If we want to prevent the spread, we can’t know if we’re spreading it unless we know if we have it in the first place.”

STARTING MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9:

- Statewide mask mandate in all public places when within six-feet of individuals outside of your immediate household.
- All social gathers limited to immediate household members until Nov. 23.
- All extracurricular school activities cancelled with the exception of college football games and high school playoffs and championships, with social distancing enforced.
- Students at all public and private colleges and universities will be required to receive weekly COVID-19 testing.
- The Utah National Guard will be deployed to provide additional resources to slow the spread of COVID-19.

For additional information, visit coronavirus.utah.gov.