

## Summary of Fall Semester

### Introduction

This brief report is a summary of some of the work done in the fall semester in response to the pandemic, on topics such as COVID testing, COVID helpline, quarantine and isolation, data used to mitigate risk, COVID communication, teaching and study spaces, and well-being. In addition to providing a summary, it outlines some of the lessons learned and makes note of some of the modifications being made for spring semester.

This report is not a complete account of the many innovations and adaptations that the college made in response to the pandemic. It does not, for example, outline changes to practices for athletics, music ensembles, theatre programming, or other co-curricular experiences; it doesn't highlight the adjustments to prospective student visits, library processes, or fall orientation; nor does it summarize revisions to operations of student or faculty governance. The list of modifications to practices and innovations during the fall is long and the whole campus has been adapting. Thank you for that. We do hope that this report, although not inclusive of all that has been done this fall, may be useful and interesting to the campus community.

### Emergency Response Team (ERT)

The Emergency Response Team (ERT) has been leading the pandemic response efforts of the campus as we all navigate how COVID-19 has impacted so many aspects of our work and lives. ERT meets daily to manage active cases on campus, monitor the cases in surrounding communities, and establish practices and procedures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Members of ERT meet twice weekly with the President's Cabinet.

ERT relies on its partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) for its guidance and response efforts to the pandemic. The state of Minnesota has responded in a way most other states have not by creating a task force specific to higher education. Dr. Cynthia Kenyon, epidemiologist for MDH, was appointed as the leader of this group and has conducted weekly meetings with college and university representatives since March. In late July, Dr. Kenyon visited Concordia to assess the plans we had in place and advise ERT on remaining questions. This partnership has been invaluable, as a reliable source of scientific data and guidance on practical matters affecting the institution.

### Campus Medical Officer and On-Campus Testing

Testing: 317 tests were done on campus by the Campus Medical Officer from August 26-December 4. 47% (151) of tests were completed in September.

Call Volume: 924 phone calls to CMO August 26-December 4 (Average=13 calls per day)

- 5% (50) August 26-31
- 24% (222) September – note: 12% (114) of **all** calls were in the first week of September
- 30% (285) October
- 38% (355) November – note: \*November 9-13 15% (139) of all calls – Highest call volume week to CMO (Average = 28 calls/day that week)
- 1% (12) December 1-4

In the spring semester, the CMO will continue to be available to do symptomatic testing and respond to calls. Asymptomatic testing remains available at the Vault Site, 1110 14th St S in Moorhead; current hours are M-F noon-7 PM and 10 AM-4 PM on weekends.

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### Quarantine/Isolation Data for Students (Data reported for the period of August 21-December 8)

Quarantine/Isolation Spaces: The spaces available were a mix of rooms at the Courtyard by Marriott in Moorhead, plus on-campus apartments, two floors of residence hall rooms (quarantine only) and three campus-owned houses. The Marriott rooms available fluctuated from 12 rooms to 50. Forty-three to 86 total beds were available. The fluctuation in number of beds was due to:

- adding more beds in Hoyum for quarantine only during the fall surge
- decreasing hotel rooms at the Marriott during low usage times
- removing on-campus spaces for a period of time due to maintenance or other nuanced reasons

### Quarantine/Isolation Bed capacity

- Average was 14% full
- Our two heights of bed capacity were as follows:
  - September 8-11: 40% full
  - November 11-16: 36% full

We've continued to exceed MDH's guideline for recommended number of quarantine/isolation beds we should have based on our on-campus student population and we will continue to utilize spaces at the Marriott in the spring semester, if necessary.

### COVID Student Helpline Data (Data reported for the period of August 21-December 8)

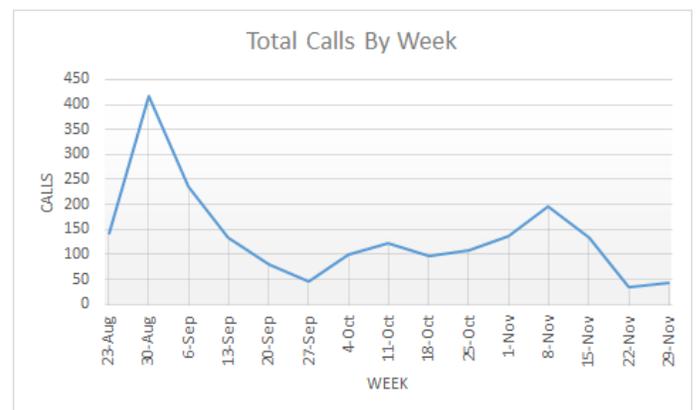
Helpline recorded and assisted with 634 cases of student quarantine and/or isolation.

- 587 were unique students (roughly 29% of the student body)
- 282 lived off-campus (48%)
- 305 lived on-campus (52%) \*We have ~1,000 students who lived on campus this fall.

Many other calls were handled that did not result in a recorded quarantine/isolation case, so the total number of unique students served exceeds this number. For total call volume (which includes questions and referrals, follow-up calls), see below.

### Helpline Call Volume

- Since August 22, the Helpline has received 1,286 incoming calls and Helpline staff have made 759 outgoing calls to assist students, for a total of 2,045 calls.
- Peak call volume was the week of August 30, when the Helpline made and received 417 calls. After this peak, call volume decreased – although the helpline did experience a smaller peak again the week of November 8 with 197 calls.



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### Helpline Staffing

- 28 staff members from across campus have been trained for a variety of roles related to Helpline, such as Quarantine/Isolation Coordination, Q/I Supplies Refresh, Meal Delivery, and Helpline Coverage.
- Staff come from the following divisions/departments: Student Development & Campus Life, Conferences & Events, Library, Athletics, Advancement, Facilities, and Dining Services.
- Typically, 3 staff manage the helpline each day during 8 AM-5 PM, SDCL staff answer calls until 9 PM and the on-call SDCL staff handle calls after hours.
- Additional staff handle cleaning, linen exchange and preparing supplies for each of the campus owned spaces used for quarantine or isolation.
- Over 2,400 meals were delivered to students in quarantine or isolation, primarily by a student team of 4.
- Additional staff will be added to the team and trained for spring semester from Global Learning, Offutt School of Business, Business Office, Theatre, and Campus Ministry. This will be important to assist with the quarantine and isolation during the period of required testing.

### Employee COVID-19 Management

In the fall semester, the HR Office managed at least 277 employees who contacted the office regarding COVID symptoms or possible exposure. The HR Office responded to 34 positive COVID cases. None of these cases were due to an exposure on campus.

### Daily Symptom Check

A daily survey was distributed to all employees and students via email. Results were analyzed daily to better understand the health of the campus. Completion rate of the survey was a concern throughout the semester.

After reviewing responses and listening to users, the survey was consolidated into four primary questions for the spring semester. The respondents will appreciate an abbreviated version of the Daily Symptom Check, which we hope will increase completion.

### Compliance Observations

More than 1,000 observations were completed by students and staff across campus. Study spaces, dining spaces, commons areas, outdoor spaces, and learning spaces were among the most common types of spaces observed. Data collected measured the percentage of correct mask wearing, social distancing, and access to sanitizer/cleaning supplies at various locations throughout the day/week.

In general, the campus had more challenges with social distancing than mask wearing, finding that students often walked in pairs or groups, both indoors and out. Toward the end of the semester, concerns arose based on the behavior of students in study spaces. Spring semester will provide an opportunity to revisit those policies and determine what further action must be taken to minimize risk.

### Using Data to Understand Risk and Work with Eide Bailly

During the summer, the college engaged the firm of Eide Bailly to adapt their work assisting healthcare facilities in their pandemic mitigation strategies into a higher education setting. The college has incorporated the use of an analytic tool they created as part of its own mitigation strategies.

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The Eide Bailly tool collects and analyzes several sorts of data:

- Information about the health of individuals
  - positive COVID-19 tests
  - symptoms of illness
  - close contacts with COVID-19
- Information about how spaces on campus are used and managed:
  - daily schedule of use of classrooms
  - daily schedule of individual students
  - residences of individual students
  - use of specific public, non-classroom spaces
- Information about behaviors known to influence viral spread gathered by direct observation in public spaces (compliance check) and behavior self-reported through surveys
- Information about commitment and attention to pandemic-smart actions, such as responses to surveys and participation rates.

The tool assigns “risk points” to the individual pieces of information noted above and then provides the means to analyze how those risk points are distributed across the Concordia community. Examples would include the ability to look at how risk points are distributed across buildings or between students who live on campus vs. off campus. It is also possible to distinguish between risk points assigned on the basis of the source of those risk points, i.e., to look at risk points generated by reports of positive COVID tests separately from those generated by, say, survey non-completion.

In summarizing what we have learned fall semester through this tool, it is important to understand that the project is not, and was not intended to be, a rigorously designed and conducted epidemiological study. Its value is that it provides a way for us to organize information in the service of discussion. Some examples of how the use of the tool has informed discussion and interpretation of the college’s success in its mitigation efforts:

- We have been able to watch whether the tool shows that students who report positive test results show up in clusters associated with particular residence halls and classrooms. They have not.
- When, for instance, we noted that there was an issue that classroom furniture was being rearranged inappropriately, we were able to look to see whether those spaces showed more connection to student health concerns than others. Any differences that were seen were not remarkable.
- We have used information from the observations of masking and distancing in specific public spaces as part of discussions about the monitoring and availability of public spaces—particularly study rooms in the ISC, Memorial Auditorium, etc.
- Because the framework Eide Bailly brought to the project gave prominence to organizational vigilance as a key component of successful mitigation plans, the tool has sparked a somewhat continuous conversation about and interpretation of the gap between actions in support of masking and distancing (which have been consistently high) and levels of participation in daily health surveys and weekly commitment surveys, which have been disappointing, especially with students). The discussion of survey completion rates has been the primary consideration as we consider the approach for spring semester.

As this semester ends, we reflect on what our experience of the tool suggests we should do differently in 2021. These ideas are at the fore:

- 1- Revise and reform our practices around the Daily Symptom Check and the weekly commitment survey.

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- 2- Review our processes for ensuring that the information available to the tool is as accurate as possible.
- 3- Review with Eide Baily the weights attached to various forms of risk.

### Communication

The President's Office held four campus-wide meetings in July and early August regarding COVID campus planning and preparedness. These sessions were well attended and offered Q&A. A landing webpage was created for everything COVID. A communication plan was identified and implemented that included bi-weekly Cobwebs sent to employees and students.

#### COVID-19 related First Semester Communication

- 38 email updates to campus as well as a number of video messages
- Onward Concordia microsite created for both the internal and external audience
- FAQs and campus updates maintained within the site
- Postcard to parents to alert them to the site
- COVID-19 case numbers maintained within the site

Updates will be provided weekly on Tuesdays during the spring semester. Additional opportunities for Q&A and discussion will be provided on an as-needed basis.

#### AskCord@cord.edu

The AskCord@cord.edu email address was created shortly before the semester began and received over 350 inquiries throughout the semester. The topics ranged from questions about the Daily Symptom Check to clarification of expectations and occasionally concerns about behaviors and practices. Overall, the themes gathered from these inquiries were used to determine which topics need to be addressed in campus communication or on the CobberNet page. The AskCord@cord.edu email will continue to be available during spring semester.

### Classrooms and Teaching Spaces

In order for in-person learning to be accomplished fall semester, an academic space management team (led by Lisa Sjoberg, Registrar, with membership from the Registrar's Office, ITS, Facilities, and ERT) had two key priorities: (1) establishing room capacities and furniture arrangements that maintained 6' physical distancing; and (2) equipping our classrooms with necessary technology to provide flexibility for various delivery modes and to accommodate attendance of students who may be quarantined/isolated.

The Fall 2020 course schedule was revised to reflect online, blended, and in-person delivery modes and reserved classrooms according to these learning mode and course capacities. The daily schedule was modified slightly to ensure a minimum of 15 minutes between all classes, providing time to organically de-densify buildings and clean classrooms. In the fall, 272 courses were taught in a blended-in person/online format, 298 taught in person and 101 taught online. Spring semester course formats will be very similar with 227 blended in-person/online, 213 taught in person and 134 taught online.

Each classroom was equipped with a number of supplies and resources: room layout diagrams, signs requesting that no furniture be moved, a 6' measuring stick, cleaning supplies and instructions, directional signs, and room capacity information.

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Despite signage and multiple communication reminders, classroom furniture continued to be rearranged and not repositioned according to the posted layout diagrams. This problem got worse as the semester went on and was paramount in ISC, Old Main, and Olin. Initially, the response to reported issues was for the staff in the Registrar's Office and Facilities to go to the spaces and reset furniture. As the problem perpetuated, a more structured reporting and prevention strategy was implemented that included asking faculty to report if furniture was not set according to the diagram, having Facilities check and report on classrooms each morning, and having a student classroom observation team check trouble spots each night. As reports of classroom compliance with 6-foot distancing were shared, the Registrar's or Dean's Office contacted faculty teaching in reported classrooms to gather details and remind them to report issues. Through this process, we learned that most classroom furniture rearrangement was happening in the evenings and not due to scheduled classes. When the problem continued in Old Main, evening access to that building were suspended.

### **Classrooms: Lessons learned**

There was no evidence of the virus being spread in classrooms or other teaching spaces, suggesting that the fall semester strategies for mitigating risk in teaching spaces were successful. In order to maintain this standard, classes will continue to be offered in blended, online and in-person formats, with teaching spaces continuing to be set up for 6-foot social distancing and mask wearing required.

The key lessons learned from Fall 2020 that are recommended to implement in Spring 2021 are:

- 1- Remind the community that furniture placement is one of our key COVID mitigation strategies. Reinforce how to report issues and the importance of resetting furniture that is not appropriately distanced.
- 2- Begin the semester with classroom compliance checks.
- 3- Proactively work with groups that use classrooms in the evenings to remind them about classroom furniture expectations.
- 4- Anticipate adjusting room assignments based on pedagogical and technology needs.
- 5- Connect and collaborate with faculty who may request different furniture layouts. (Contact Dawn Current in the Registrar's Office to discuss options.)

### **Classroom technology**

All general purpose classrooms, all assembly classrooms, and many science laboratories were equipped with webcams to support delivery and attendance modes; a total of 86 webcams were installed. Additional technology, such as voice amplifiers, were made available to faculty. ITS offered training sessions on how to use classroom technology and offered many training sessions on software including Moodle, Zoom, and more.

In terms of classroom technology, the most frequently reported concern was faculty having challenges projecting loudly enough and, for those attending remotely, hearing and participating in class. ITS followed up on these concerns and has purchased and tested microphones to use in larger classrooms for Spring 2021. Sometimes these issues were due to furniture layout so, when possible, the Registrar's Office relocated classes or connected with faculty members who wanted different furniture arrangements in a specific classroom. Additional voice amplification units are available; contact Erik Ramstad with your request.

### **Use of Information Technology**

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We have all become accustomed to use of more technology in our work and learning. Campus status for Zoom usage from March 1 - December 31, 2020, (including all of the CLV programs and the DoD Language Training Center) are as follows:

New users to Concordia Zoom = 2,343

Zoom Business Licenses (paid):

- March 2020, we were using 15 of 20 licenses
- December 2020, we were using 338 of 340 licenses
- This represents a 2,153.33% increase in use for that period.

Meeting Stats (this includes use of Zoom for teaching):

- Total meetings: 64,952
- Total meeting minutes: 22,515,011
- Total participants: 477,119

Webinar Stats: (includes tests)

- Total webinars: 78
- Total webinar participants: 2,614
- Recording storage: 1.48TB

This data does not include the hours of meetings on Teams or other video platforms.

## Study Spaces

Individual study spaces were available for students to reserve in the Library, Grant Center, and the Integrated Science Center (ISC). Larger spaces were also available in various academic buildings, intended to accommodate small groups of students working or studying together. Thousands of reservations were made by students using the campus Event Management System (EMS).

Over the course of the semester, as risk levels increased, the decision was made to require masks to be kept on when using study spaces, even when alone. This, along with following the capacity guidelines posted, became an increased problem as the semester progressed. Regular reports of students not wearing masks, primarily in ISC, became a source of concern and reflection as groups considered how to prepare for spring semester. Compliance will be necessary to keep study spaces open and available to students this spring.

## Administrative and Student Support Offices

Plans were identified to de-densify office spaces, while ensuring services remained available to students and employees. In some cases, this included a reduction in open office hours, encouraging appointments (versus drop-in services), virtual meetings, and employees working remotely and rotating into offices. Several offices identified and implemented electronic form processing.

In spring semester, we anticipate similar practices. The campus community will be informed about any changes to procedures if guidance from Governor Walz or MDH requires we further de-densify our campus operations.

## Dining Services

Seating in Anderson Commons was reduced to 165, less than 25% of normal, to allow for 6 feet of spacing between all chairs and tables. In response to the limited seating availability, overflow seating was set up in the Centrum and focused extensively on to-go meals. Since the beginning of the semester, over 52,000 to-go meals were served. Additionally, a to-go kiosk called Cobb Express in the East

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Complex served 3,000 to-go meals this fall. To accommodate students needing to quarantine or isolate, an online ordering system was created to allow students to request meals each day. Since the start of the semester, over 2,400 meals were prepared for students in quarantine or isolation.

Opening of some of the dining operations is impacted by campus risk levels. Beginning January 10, Coffee Stop and Korn Krib services will resume; but, continued monitoring of viral spread and campus risk are important determinants of which services will remain open throughout the semester.

### **Support for Student and Employee Well-Being**

Attention to student and employee well-being was an important component of the fall semester.

Student support services such as tutoring and the writing center shifted to virtual delivery and academic counseling offered flexible options for students that needed assistance. The counseling center experienced a decline in demand for services, similar to what has been reported in other college counseling centers around the state and nation. The Cobber Food Pantry was established this summer and 3,409 total pounds of food has been distributed. Campus Events Commission, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission, other student organizations, and Residence Hall RAs and staff organized events for students.

Human Resources posted and shared 26 webinars across a variety of interests to support employee well-being. They included items such as how to wear your mask appropriately, family conversation starters to talk through feelings, activities you can do during COVID, etc. A “Wellness and Work from Home” section was added to the HR webpage. HR also implemented a Learn to Live program, which experienced 13.3% utilization, which is higher than other organizations; 67 employees enrolled in a specific program and 30 people enrolled in the weekly mindfulness moment text.

Beginning in March 2020, the college waived the 3-day PTO period for accessing EIB in certain quarantine and isolation instances. For Calendar Year 2020, 41 employees utilized 1,885 hours of EIB for COVID-19 quarantine, isolation and ongoing medical issues due to COVID-19.

In addition to Respite Days and Easter Recess/Spring Break, Faculty Senate supported the reconvening classes on Friday, February 5, to a day devoted to wellness and well-being. Faculty and student government leaders are planning a full day of activities. The Alumni Office is planning a midwinter festival February 22-28. There is ongoing conversation about how to provide other ways to support student and employee wellness throughout the spring semester.