

NEWS RELEASE

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SUNY ONEONTA IMPLEMENTS COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SPRING REOPENING PLAN FOCUSED ON SAFETY OF ENTIRE ONEONTA COMMUNITY

ONEONTA, N.Y. – Spring 2021 classes began remotely yesterday at SUNY Oneonta and the college has put into action a comprehensive plan for a safe and successful semester. Developed with broad input from students, faculty, staff, public health experts, community leaders and elected officials – including City of Oneonta Mayor Gary Herzig – the [Spring 2021 Academic Continuity and Health and Safety Plan](#) includes several new initiatives aimed at protecting the safety of the campus and greater Oneonta community. These include:

- weekly testing of all on-campus students, students taking in-person classes and off-campus students who come to campus to use facilities such as the library or fitness center;
- weekly surveillance testing of random samples encompassing 10 percent of off-campus students living in the Oneonta area;
- creating a vice president for external affairs position to ensure open communication between the campus and Oneonta city and town officials and constituencies;
- adopting a low-density residential model where only about 650 students will live on campus, in single-occupancy rooms in residence halls spread across campus; and
- establishing a Parents of Off-Campus Student Ambassador program to build community among off-campus students and their parents.

“SUNY Oneonta has worked extremely hard throughout the past few months to prepare for this moment,” said Acting President Dennis Craig. “However, we will continue to remind students and employees to be vigilant by washing their hands frequently and following mask and social distancing mandates. Students, employees, parents and community members alike must commit to doing their part, day in and day out, to ensure a safe semester.”

City of Oneonta Mayor Gary Herzig said, “I am pleased with the open lines of communication and the spirit of collaboration that have been developed with the college. Only through working together can we ensure the health and safety

of all within the Oneonta community. The college's plan for weekly testing and clear expectations will help us succeed."

Over 1,500 students registered for at least one in-person class. About 650 students have opted to live in residence halls this semester, while housing capacity on campus is more than 3,600.

"This is an extremely low-density model and we will test 100 percent of our on-campus students and 100 percent of our students enrolled in in-person classes every week," said Provost Leamor Kahanov, who co-chairs the college's COVID Response Team. "This will help us identify and assist infected students as soon as possible."

COVID Response Team Co-Chair Julie Piscitello, the college's vice president for finance and administration, added that testing will give on-campus students confidence. "It will assure that they feel safe and cared for in our residence halls, consistent with SUNY Oneonta's values," she said.

The COVID Response Team continues to track on-campus cases, consider staffing needs related to the pandemic and assess external factors such as regional infection trends, the availability of healthcare resources and the rollout of a system to immunize people against the virus. The spring reopening plan is a living document, designed to allow the college to quickly adapt to changing circumstances.