Welcome and Town Hall with WashU Student Affairs Transcript

Reggie Gacad: Hello everyone. My name is Reggie Gacad and I want to welcome you to our Town Hall for undergraduate family members. I am the Assistant Director of the First Year Center. And tonight I’m joined by senior leadership in the student affairs division of the University. They will introduce themselves shortly. We are excited that you’ve chosen to join us for today’s conversation. Some information before we get started. We know that these are unprecedented times and that there are many stressors for our new students, parents, and family members. We hope that tonight’s session will help you to better understand the resources that are available through the University and we'll address those questions that you might have about the transition to life here at WashU. We'll do our very best to answer as many questions as possible tonight. And we will also provide some answers to the questions that we've received through families.wustl.edu later this week. Now I want to make sure that you know how to submit questions during this Town Hall. You’ll notice that you’ve been given the ability to ask questions via the Zoom Q&A feature. Some of our professional staff are helping to field these questions. Those are the panelists that you see on the screen. That’s a First Year Center or Student Affairs. In addition, we have all the pre-submitted questions. We will do our best to answer as many of them as we can over the next hour. If you are in the Zoom, if you’re in the Zoom Q&A feature, you may see us dismiss some of these questions. We will ask your questions live by using the dismiss function, as we’re moving them to a separate list for ease of being able to see the list of questions. Let’s go ahead and make sure you know how to use the Q&A feature. You use the Q&A feature to share some of the places that you’re watching from. And we'll name a few of these places here on air. While you’re doing that this Town Hall is being recorded. Later this week, we'll upload this Town Hall to the families.wustl.edu website. We have families joining us in from St. Louis, Missouri, Cleveland, Ohio, and Athens, Georgia. And now that we've had an opportunity to get to know a little bit of you, we'd like you to get to know some of the folks that are joining us on this panel. Since I know you want to hear more from our University leadership, we'll begin by having my colleagues introduce themselves. Today, first, we were joined by our Interim Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Dr. Robert Wild.

Rob Wild: I had to be the guy to not unmute my computer. Good afternoon or good evening everybody. My name is Rob Wild, Interim Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. I'll say a little bit more here in a minute after my colleagues introduce themselves.

Reggie Gacad: We’re also joined by our Interim Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students, Ms. Kawanna Leggett.

Kawanna Leggett: Hello everyone. Again, my name is Kawanna Leggett, Interim Associate Vice Chancellor and Dean of Students. I’m very much looking forward to talking more with you all within the hour. So thank you so much for our First Year Center for all you’re doing to coordinate this.

Reggie Gacad: And last but not least, we have our Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Support and Wellness, Dr. Kirk Dougher.

Kirk Dougher: Hello everyone. We welcome all the families in joining us this evening and I look forward to being able to answer some of the questions and to be able to give some of the information that we have to you. So again, welcome.
Reggie Gacad: Awesome. So we'll go ahead and get transitioned over to our remarks. Rob, we'll go ahead and start with you.

Rob Wild: Yeah. And thank you everybody. We are gonna, I'm gonna give, probably about a 10 minute overview that'll answer some of the questions that you all have. Really, my goal tonight is to talk about not just our COVID related updates that everybody has on their mind. You can go back and start with that first slide. But also to really talk about the adjustment to college and the first year and what to expect in the first year and give you guys a little bit of advice and guidance as you're going through this transition.

We know there's a lot going on in the world. I wanna just especially acknowledge the families that are tuning in from the West Coast that are experiencing the horrible wildfires. I know there's a hurricane right now, hitting the gulf. We're thinking about all of you guys and we are grateful to all of you who are able to tune in from those locations. I also just wanna say thank you for your patience and your understanding. This is an incredible transition that all of you have just experienced with us. And I just can't tell you how much we appreciate your support, your partnership as we start this year, that this has been, you know, you've heard all the cliche words, unprecedented, et cetera, but really for us, our goal throughout this has been to welcome our students back and to have as much of a residential experience as we can. And I'm excited to say in the first couple of days of the first semester, we are off to a good start.

Obviously with this first slide here, I'm just gonna show some recent photos that were taken around campus in the last 48 hours. Safety has been our priority. It's our priority anyways, but it certainly is when we're in the middle of a pandemic. We do have a live dashboard. I don't know if it can be put into the chat but yesterday we launched our first iteration of the live dashboard. Some may be wondering about our screening procedure. We screened in the last 10 days around 3000 students and we had four positive cases, which is remarkably low and a really good sign for us as we start the Fall Semester. That information is gonna be updated every Monday and Thursday. And we're gonna include that information throughout the semester and likely throughout this academic year as a tool to ensure transparency.

And I have to say on behalf of my colleagues, we're really proud of all of you and all of our students. People have been great. They've been paying attention to our messaging all summer. They've been working with us around the masking and physical distancing, which of course are our two biggest public health principles that we're all working on. We have launched a student health ambassador program. You can see Maya, one of our great seniors on the right here, working yesterday, outside the Danforth University Center, really trying to use positive reinforcement to encourage safe behavior for our students. She has a bottle of hand sanitizer with her that she went through yesterday.

We are continuing our surveillance and our diagnostic testing program. As a quick reminder, diagnostic testing is a program we have in place for faculty, staff, and students when there are suspected cases of COVID that we can quickly on campus, provide free testing to students or populations of students as needed to quickly determine whether there is a risk of COVID within that population. That testing is already set up here on campus and it involves the nasal swab test. We also have, as I mentioned earlier, the surveillance testing system that's currently located at West Campus, that all of the families that just moved students in have experienced, that will be located at West Campus for the next two weeks and then we will move it to the Danforth Campus. Every student is being asked to submit a saliva sample every two weeks this semester. And that's part of our plan for monitoring COVID.
And then we have lots of housing that’s set aside on campus. We do have students living there right now, both quarantine and isolation housing. And we know this is hard. We heard this was hard from some of our peer institutions and we’ve experienced this here. We are glad that our housing is on campus, where we have nurses and staff from the Habif Health and Wellness Center that are checking in as well as residential life staff. Food is being delivered. We’re trying to provide as much oversight but we think this is an important part of our strategy.

Moving to the next slide, please. Some have been asking in the last week about relaxing restrictions. You can see here in this photo, this is a photo taken yesterday, not by me, on the steps of Brookings Hall where we have students safely gathering together and studying and eating outside of Schnuck Pavilion. But our goal, if we can continue to maintain the low positive rate here in our community, is to slowly begin lifting some of the restrictions that students have experienced as they return to campus. Already yesterday we began to open more seating and dining, many have been asking about the Sumers Recreation Center and recreation space. I’ll tell you hot off the presses that we are going to be announcing on the next 24 hours that we’re gonna begin on Thursday, opening our outdoor recreation spaces, the track, the tennis courts, spaces that students can sign up and use on a limited basis but in a way that allows students to have more access.

Our varsity athletes who’ve all been, made some great sacrifices and been deeply impacted by this, we're hoping to get our athletic programs at least up and running on a training program over the next week. And then we’re gonna continue to monitor our ability to release restrictions on student group activities and student activities. I will say for at least the next week, to two weeks, as we’re continuing our surveillance screening, we are not planning to make any changes, to the meeting requirements but I remain hopeful that as we continue to have good progress this semester that we’ll be able to be flexible and monitor things and adjust as we can. I think everybody, as we’ve said all along is going to need to bring a lot of flexibility to this semester, because what I would expect is that we'll be relaxing and constricting and just doing so all in the interest of safety.

Next. So I did wanna say a word about the academic experience as many of you know, most of our students have experienced some virtual learning. This is students from last spring, experiencing virtual learning. But I do wanna show the next slide that shows a class here on the Danforth Campus from yesterday to give you an idea about some of our in-person courses. This is professor Shanti Parikh in Anthropology, who is in our largest lecture hall on campus, Wrighton Hall 300, where you can see, this is me standing in the back yesterday for about 10 minutes, watching this lecture on the AIDS epidemic, where we have students who are all in class with her sitting in seats with the green coverings on the back that we've put in there to provide adequate spacing. And it was quite a heartwarming experience yesterday to be able to see one of our several in-person classes, many in person classes that were taking place yesterday and our faculty, as you can see, are excited to be back just like many of our students as well.

Next. Okay. So now I’m gonna shift a little bit, I know we’ll have a lot of more COVID related questions but I wanted to just talk a little bit about, you know, just the first year in general. I know this is, the disclaimer on all of this of course is that, you know, COVID is gonna be in the back of our minds as we go through this next year. But this is for many of us and for you and your students a really important and symbolic life transition. And I wanted to share a little bit of information for you as you're thinking at home about how you can help support your students and how we can work together to make sure our students have a successful first year.

This next slide is a couple of images that I showed to all of our students last week. I don’t know if my colleagues have seen this. This is a young Rob Wild with hair on his head showing up to Washington
University for the first time in the fall of 1989 with my mom, my dad was taking that picture and this is the back of the station wagon. You can see we loaded full of my belongings that I'm pretty sure I packed the night before. And we drove all the way from New York to come to WashU for my first year at WashU. And I show this picture not to show you that I actually did once have hair on my head and that I had the big 1980s glasses that I'm sure many of my friends on this call also had, you know who you are, but I all, I really wanna show you cause I often look at this picture at this time of year and think about what it must be like for our students and their families to be dropping a student off. Cause I remember this very well. You can see in that picture on the right, I looked not so excited to have my mom dropping me off. My mom looks more excited than any human being on the planet for some reason, I don't know what that was all about. Maybe she was happy to get rid of me. But I am now at the stage of my life where I have four children. My oldest is a senior in high school. So for many of you, I'm a year behind you but I'm now more thinking about this experience from your perspective than from that of your student. And I'll talk about that a little bit later here in my remarks. You could go to the next slide.

So the first year of any transition and y'all are experiencing this already, I wanted to highlight three different things that I think you can expect to be seeing this fall semester with your students. One is something I will just call the social rollercoaster. And this is a weird year because the social scene is very different as people are starting, but I've, you know, students are making friends, they're beginning to interact with people in their residential communities and finding those new friendships that will be an important part of the WashU experience. But what we hear from students every fall semester in their first year and from families is just how much things change over that first semester. The people that you knew from your home community, that you were really good friends when you arrived at WashU with may turn out not to be your best friends, that you thought. Your roommate, who you may have selected or found over the summer, turns out that you’re not the friends that you thought you would be. People that you haven’t met yet for our new students are people that are, are people who will come into social circles. And so I think for some parents, you experienced a little bit of whiplash, as you’re thinking about the groups that your students are beginning to engage with. That's normal. We want that to happen. This is all part of adjusting to college and really going out on your own and forging your, what will become your true adult identity, which leads me to my second point, which is around changing priorities.

And these really are about your student as they're experiencing life in college, trying to figure out what it is they want to do with their lives. They have all had great preparation to be here, thanks to you, all of you on this call as well as the schools and the communities that they're coming from. But this really is a time where they're trying to figure out what matters to them, what do they wanna learn about, how do they wanna engage in the world. And that is an important part of the first year and something that I think can be surprising. Those Thanksgiving conversations are the jokes that we always like to talk about every year, where a student will come home with a new tattoo or a different color hair, a new romantic partner, all of those things are part of that changing priorities as students are beginning to experience their own independent adult life. And that's important and we are on that journey with you watching that here on the front lines and experiencing that with your students.

The last thing I just wanna highlight is around academic rigor. And whether we're in a COVID year or not, Washington University is a challenging place. And the class of 2024 is among the most talented group of entering college students in the world. These are smart students. These are students who are good writers, who will be good scientists, good physicians, good community leaders. They are all on the edge of greatness. And they are all suddenly surrounded by people who have the same level of academic and intellectual preparation as them. And that is hard. And our faculty are here. And I hope you knew this when
you signed up for WashU to challenge, to challenge how people write, to challenge how people problem solve, to challenge our critical thinking, to challenge how we develop as young scholars and that academic rigor is hard. It leads to stress and anxiety that my colleague Dr. Dougher is gonna talk about in a second. And that is normal. That is part of coming to a place like Washington University and learning to find your way. And I can tell you, and Reggie and I are both alums of WashU. We've shared these stories ourselves. We remember this ourselves really trying to find our way at WashU and you can get to the other side and be a smarter and better person because of it.

Now I wanna shift to one of my last thing and before I turn things over, which is talking about how you all can help us. So if you could go to the next slide for me. Yep go back to the, what to expect in that first year slide. So, how can you help us help your student? The most important thing first of course, is to make sure that you know the resources that are available here. Learn about those resources, understand what is here. And that's really where my colleagues in the First Year Center have been working all summer with you to make sure that you know what is available as you enter the WashU campus. And I know Kirk, I mentioned, might talk a little bit about mental health resources that are available but, you know, we want your students to find the people and the departments here that will help them when they have challenges. And so part of the way you can do that is you can sneakily remind them when they're stressed about their summer internship, that we have our career center here that is here to help students. You can remind them when they're having trouble in a core and in a classroom setting and they've had, and you think they may need, some help with a learning disability that we have an office of Disability Resources. We have a full health center that is here to serve our students and many, many other services, including a writing center and other academically focused services. And so learn about those and let your students advocate for themselves when they need those services.

The third thing I wanna mention and normally when I give this presentation, you're still here sitting in front of me. You're not home yet, but this is still important. You need to think about how you want to communicate with your student. My two oldest, I have a son and a daughter who are my two oldest and I have to say in my experience, getting my son, Jack, who's a senior to respond to my texts is an impossibility. In fact I need to basically text him that something is broken with his huge gaming system that he's set up in his room to get him to respond. Whereas my daughter has already texted me three times while we've been on this call, just letting me know what's going on with school. And I think that's probably true for all of you, as you're thinking about how you communicate with your students. And it's important to set up how and when you want to stay in touch. Some of you are, we're going to text all day. Some of you are, we're gonna FaceTime once a week. Some of you are, I just need you to ping me once a month so that I know you're alive and you're there. And that is up to you and your student but it's an important thing to talk about for those of you, especially for those of you who have students who have returned here to campus and you're not with them.

The fourth piece is to be open to change. I mentioned already that you'll see shifting priorities with your students. And it's important that you also be open to that and supportive of your students. This is a time for all of us who have been this age before you probably remember our own shifting priorities and our own needs to think about different career paths for ourselves. And being open to that change will help you help your student.

And then the last one, I just want to share a little story that is gonna make me really emotional as I think about my own son Jack, going off to college next year. But I wanna just share a story that we like to joke about in our family of a video of my son, Jack, when he was four playing soccer. If you remember, any of you
who've had children who've played soccer prior to the age of six. It's quite an entertaining event. There really is no skill, kids don't know whether they're on offense or defense. If a goal is scored, frankly, it's a miracle. And those little kids just go back and forth on the field in little clumps with coaches and parents around them, yelling at them.

And the video that we like to show is of my son, Jack getting in a breakaway. And, you know, with my oldest son, I had visions of him suddenly playing soccer in Europe, and he's gonna be a famous soccer player. And there he is breaking away. You can hear me on the video yelling. And then out of the corner of his eye, he remembers that on the other side of this hedge there's a playground. And in the middle of his breakaway, he runs away from the ball and runs off to the playground. And you see me on the video yelling and running after him through the hedge and onto the playground and him coming back with his arms around my neck and me putting him back down and him getting back on the soccer field.

And that story is a good analogy for sending a kid to college. And, you know, Jack would be mortified if he knew I was telling this to 300 people on a Zoom call. But really I'm sending a kid to college, those things from that story are still very important. Your kids still need to explore and they need to follow their hearts. And we need to as parents let them do that and find that space. But we also need to be there for them when they need us, when they veer off and we need to be paying attention to them and watching them as they learn to navigate the world of being an adult. And we need to remember that we will always be their parents. No matter how our relationship changes we are there for our children and our children will always look to us for that guidance. The relationship will change, I'm not saying that this next phase is going to be easy but if you can just always remember the soccer field and the adult child, those needs are still the same and that's still very important.

So I will end with my last slide. And speaking of mortified, if these two students, parents are on this call, I apologize in advance. I did warn them that I might show this to a group of parents, but this is two of our members of the class of 2024 from yesterday downstairs here in the Danforth University Center. This is Jamie on the left, she's from the Bay area. This is Erica on the right, she is from Seattle. They were randomly assigned together as students in Hitzeman. They appear from my observation and my 10 minute conversation with them yesterday to be fast friends. We'll see if that remains throughout the semester based on my earlier comment. I like that of course, in this picture they're following all the rules, they were following the rules before I got there. They were sitting behind our nice and safe plexiglass shields wearing their masks and staying good physical distance.

But I asked them yesterday, how they were doing. And I asked, you know, has this met your expectations? And Jamie, who's a very outgoing person, I can tell this is not gonna be the last time I meet Jamie, said to me, "No, Dr. Wild, this is not meeting my expectations. It's exceeded my expectations." And we've been planning so hard. We were worried about our students. We were worried that these restrictions are impacting their ability. And I said, "Well, Jamie, what are you talking about? How has this exceeded?" She said, "Well, partly being at home for so long, I was just ready to be somewhere else. And this just met that, but I've been making friends. I've been exploring campus. I've been walking over with Erica to The Loop. I love my classes and I'm happy to be here."

And that I think to me, I wanna leave us with, because I think that to me indicates how you know, that the world is a difficult place right now but our students just want to be here. They wanna learn. They wanna be together with other people. And we're gonna do everything possible to try to make sure that we can do that.
So I am going to let my colleagues say a couple of words. They do not have to be as long winded or show pictures of themselves from 31 years ago but I will let them each say a brief word about their areas. And then the three of us are more than happy to field any questions that you have.

**Reggie Gacad:** Thank you so much Rob. Kawanna.

**Kawanna Leggett:** Thank you. I certainly don’t have pictures for my time as a college student, but I appreciated senior Rob’s picture. Again, my name is Kawanna Leggett and I’m the interim Dean of Students. And I want to echo all of Rob’s sentiments, especially for our parents and families in terms of having a really great and smooth move-in process. We’ve moved in over 1500 first year students and welcomed their families. This was a very unique move in for us as we coupled that with the testing experience. And so thank you all for your patience and following all the guidelines that we had in place before you arrived. Move-in was pretty smooth and it was smooth because you all adhere to all the number of guidelines we had in place in terms of masking, staying in your cars while your students were being tested. And so again, we wanna reiterate our thanks for all of that. We know it was no easy process to get to campus. And so we appreciate that.

We also, I also just want to echo the sentiment of our students who are really doing a great job in following our public health guidelines. We have had a few incidents that have popped up and our Office of Student Conduct has been amazing in following up and addressing those issues as they have come to our attention. Students have multiple venues of how they can report any concerns that they may have through our COVID Concerns Portal or working with our residential life staff. And so we appreciate their reports that have come in so that we follow up appropriately.

We also, as of yesterday, an exciting new program called Student Health Ambassadors. These are a group of students who are peers who want to reemphasize the importance of our public health guidelines. Yesterday morning, we had 26 locations identified that were staffed by over 80 students who are wearing yellow shirts that talk about the importance of we’re in this together and masking, their role is really to go around campus and reemphasize all the important pieces around public health, giving out masks, hand sanitizers, reminding folks to keep their six feet distance when appropriate. And also just asking the important questions like, have you completed your daily screening tests? And so we’re very excited about the Student Health Ambassadors and the role that they’re gonna play on campus.

So we’ve talked a lot about public health guidelines, also about our testing and the move-in process. I do wanna encourage you all to know that we understand that the experience is gonna be different but we are creating wonderful opportunities for students to get engaged and to get involved. I wanna talk specifically around a couple of different areas of campus life and residential life.

For your residential life experience, we want to emphasize an important role that our staff play, particularly our RAs who serve as peer leaders on your residential floors and can be that point of contact for you to get involved but also just to get to know the campus a bit more. We also have professional staff that live within the facilities in our residential colleges, including faculty fellows, and residents. And so our faculty are there to help create an academic and intellectual environment and they’re also really helpful in terms of getting acclimated to classes and also things outside of the classroom. And finally we have our residential college directors that serve as the RAs point of contact and also our professional staff that provides emergency response, crisis response and overall resources and support for the University but live in their actual facilities in residential colleges.
The other highlight in residential life that I really wanna make sure that you know, is involvement. We have what we call the Congress of the South 40, which is a wonderful group of student leaders that are engaged in each residential college. We have opportunities for you to get involved and serve in leadership positions so that you can have some ownership about what's going on in your community. So you'll see more information coming out from CS 40. One of the things in residential life they're doing is trying to create more virtual experiences for you all to get to know each other and for your students to get to know folks beyond just their roommates.

Finally, in terms of our involvement opportunities I wanna highlight the work of Campus Life. They are working very hard to create student connections and virtual experiences. One of the things that I'm gonna put in the chat box is a link to our Washington University Student Group Organizer, WUGO, you'll find many of our events that are being hosted over the next couple of weeks. And I wanna highlight a series called the First 40, which is a first six weeks of interactive programming that we have for our campus. And really again is an additional link for virtual experiences and student connection points. Back in August, late August, we hosted a virtual activities fair that involved over 340 student groups and departments, we had many of our students participate and so just because we're not meeting a person as often, I do wanna highlight the number of experiences that we have to offer for students to get involved. And so that is my piece of this conversation. I wanna make sure that we have some opportunity and some time to ask your questions.

**Reggie Gacad:** Thank you so much, Kawanna, Kirk.

**Kirk Dougher:** Yeah, again, welcome families. My name is Kirk Dougher. I serve as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Health and Wellbeing. I have zero evidence that I once had hair but I do have my third child entering college this semester. And so he's going in, in some of the same kinds of circumstances that yours are as well. And so I have some personal empathy and experience with some of the things that you may be experiencing.

I wanted to speak a little bit about the areas that I oversee that include Habif medical services, Habif health promotion, our pharmacy that exists in our Habif area as well. We have Habif Mental Health and all of these areas as evidenced by their name are co-located. We also have two other services that are really quite important. Their relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention office does some really great work with our students in teaching bystander engagement and safe practices and other kinds of things. And lastly, we have WashU Cares, which is an entity that is primarily responsible for making sure that they reach out to your students, connect them with resources that they may need to be able to connect them with their four year advisor and anything that they can really need opportunity to be able to be finding, to be able to keep their academic performance at its upmost.

With those services clearly some of them are becoming even more important in this environment. Certainly the testing that we're doing out of Habif Medical that has happened and Dr. Wild had mentioned kind of where we are with the number of tests and I'll speak to that in the dashboard but as of today the cumulative total samples that we've collected actually is approaching about 3,500 samples. And the test results that we have back from those are again over 3000.

One of the questions that came in the Q&A was about the dashboard and especially around the cumulative cases that you'll see on that page. And those are the total numbers of cases that we have seen on the Danforth Campus since August 1st. Now some of those students obviously have recovered and are doing
very well. And right now we have a very small proportion of those students that are currently in our isolation, quarantine housing. To be more specific in our quarantine housing on campus we have two students and we have three active cases on our campus right now. So that gives you a little bit of perspective about this cumulative cases. But with regard to what Dr. Wild said, the percent of positive cases is very small and we are, I can’t tell you how pleased we are that we have that low of a number that’s turning out here. So that’s really, really good.

Another service that is really important right now is, our Habif medical, excuse me, Mental Health Services. One of the things that we’ve been concerned about is obviously this epidemic has gotten us kind of more isolated and the less connected to others, although we've been learning ways of zooming and doing other things to try and stay connected with friends and family. But the concern that we have had as the semester has been approaching is exactly what kind of a toll that might take on the student's mental health. I've noted some questions in the Q&A that are also inquiring about engaging social opportunities and other kinds of things. And these are areas that we have been specifically targeting over the last couple of months to make sure that we have services stood up to be able to accommodate that.

Habif Mental Health has eliminated some of the things that students previously considered to be barriers to their accessing mental health, specifically the way that they are going through a kind of an intake process to be able to access services. The things that we’ve adjusted there should make it much more rapid for them to be able to get in. They're engaging in a very kind of virtual way with many of their clients, all of your students being here in Missouri will have access to being able to see them through video conferencing which many of the students are much more comfortable being able to do rather than see somebody face to face is making a lot of students, students very nervous. And so we've set that up. And additionally, we've got a couple of other things that we're doing.

We used to have a program called Let's Talk, where it was basically our therapists would position themselves around campus in pre specified location. So the students could walk in and talk to them and be able to kind of share with them some of the things that were coming up for them. We've moved that also to a virtual environment. So there is a kind of an open what they're calling, Let's Tele Talk. So the students can come in and chat with them about those kinds of issues.

And then lastly, we also have enhanced our relationship with an outside provider that is making sure that we have the 24 hour call coverage for any student that needs to get hold of somebody and for students to be able to reach out to Habif Mental Health and schedule an appointment, to be able to speak to somebody where they can do all of that during the daytime and then in the after hours where it makes sure that we have these services available for students then as well.

So some of the questions that we get asked every year about this time is, you know, how do I know if my students are struggling? And if they're, is anxiety is driving them, are they depressed? What's going on? And going back to what Dr. Wild said earlier, I think one of the keys to the first semester for parents is to be able to establish that relationship and that rapport with your students. And most importantly, to figure out how you’re communicating with them. Now, this is different than any year that you've had before with them and given that they’re absent from under your roof or under your tutelage, it becomes ever important. And my children like Dr. Wild's have very different communication styles. And I found that the most important thing throughout the years of working with parents and their students that they can do is for parents to be able to position themselves in a place where they're trying to understand what the experience is.
Now, people like me, men that have been brought up in this U.S culture often socialized to be able to provide answers and solutions as the first instantaneous response. And let me caution all you dads out there, it's a wrong thing to do. It's a bad idea. And really the best thing that you can do is to be able to try and see the world through your student's eyes and to ask any questions that help you to clarify what that experience might look like through their perspective. That's very helpful. And it also sets you up as a person that they can go to and talk through things with because you've raised bright students and bright children and they know most of the answers that you're going to give them and they also know most of the solutions. What they need is the validation of their experience. And when that anxiety starts to alter their behavior that you've been seeing over the past couple of months, you know, whatever has been normal for them for the last couple of months, when you get clues that something's different, it's time for them just to be able to give Habif a phone call and check that out. And we would welcome those phone calls so that they can come in and see us.

So I'll end there to be able to give more time for additional questions and so forth. And again, glad to have your students here on campus with us.

**Reggie Gacad:** Thank you all. We're now going to move into a Q&A portion of our evening. Rob, we have a couple of questions asking about the University alert levels and I know that you've described these before, but what does it mean? What do the various levels mean for my interactions that my student might have at those various levels or can expect to have? And then secondly, does WashU consult with local health departments when considering what level the University might be at?

**Rob Wild:** So the alert level system, which again, I may ask if someone could just post a link to our fall plan in the chat, cause it's described in really good detail there. Was a system we arrived at because we wanted to provide the community with a level of concern that we had about COVID within our community. The alert level is determined by a group called the COVID monitoring team. That is a group of mainly medical professionals, Dr. LeBlanc, who works for Kirk Dougher is a member of that group, as well as several of our infectious disease faculty. And they are the ones who will determine whether we should move between the alert levels. Now, again, I am not a medical professional, I'm not on that group but I would hope that if we continue to keep the levels low within our community and the regional conditions decreased related to COVID, that we would be able to move to yellow at some point this semester.

The question about the local health is interesting. We of course, most of the University is located in St. Louis County, which is under the jurisdiction of the, so we're under the jurisdiction of the St. Louis County Health Department, part of our campuses in the city, which has the St. Louis City Health Department. Many of our own infectious disease doctors are actually consulting with the County as they're making their own decisions about County conditions and situations there.

But what it means for students basically is what you're seeing right now, for those who came to campus, an orange alert level is a very restrictive level. It requires everybody to be wearing masks. The biggest thing for me at orange is that it affects our ability to open our recreation center, which we likely would tie to a yellow level. It affects our ability to allow group meetings. I've seen some comments in the chat but we are gonna make all of our decisions about, you know, putting students in situations where they can interact with one another based on the scientific recommendations of our infectious disease team and the University's COVID monitoring team. But I think we are gonna expect some movement throughout the course of the year.
Reggie Gacad: Thank you. Kirk we have a couple of questions asking about the flu shot and knowing that, that is important for us to be thinking about in addition to the way that the pandemic is. Will the flu shot be available to students on campus? If so, when?

Kirk Dougher: Yeah, a great question and the flu shot, which is important every year, especially in communal living situations like we have in residential halls, it’s even more important this year for a couple of reasons. One, to be able to make sure that the students avoid any sickness as much as possible to be able to alleviate any concerns that they might have cause the flu symptoms and symptoms of COVID could mirror each other in ways that could be very disconcerting for our students. So we don’t want them to get worried. Additionally we wanna be able to protect the resources that Habif medical services to be able to utilize for the, any kind of COVID treatment or other kinds of respiratory issues that we might find. And by having those flu shots eliminates that.

We do anticipate our flu shots, we have our order in and that order shows up kind of as it shows up but as a medical facility, WashU Medical School, our Habif medical folks also order as part of that batch order. So we’re expecting those to show up in the next couple of weeks. The CDC instructs us that the best time to be able to get a flu shot is during the month of, end of September through the first, a week or so in October. And it will certainly be well within that window. Students can obtain a flu shot on a number of different ways. One, they can create a well visit to be able to go into the Habif medical services. And by the way we have set up two separate clinics inside Habif Medical, one is for well visits and the other one is more for respiratory illnesses. To try and keep the students that may be struggling with COVID or other related issues, separated from other students who are not. And they can schedule a well visit and go in and get their shot there. And in addition, we will be standing up a great number of flu clinics on campus where students can drop in and get that shot right there on campus in various locations. Additionally, if your students should so choose, they’re certainly welcome to be able to utilize local CVS and Walgreens and other kinds of stores that your insurance probably covers as well to be able to get those flu shots.

Reggie Gacad: Thank you. Kawanna you chatted a little bit about finding connection in the residential halls. Would you be able to speak a little bit more about students who might be learning remotely and how they may be able to participate in engagement or campus activities. How might those remote students find connection and engagement to WashU?

Kawanna Leggett: Well one of the exciting pieces to all of this is that many of our opportunities will be virtual. And so regardless if you're on campus or not, you still have the opportunities to engage and get involved. The activities fair that I mentioned earlier was all virtual with over 300 organizations participating virtually. And so we, we recognize that everyone's not in the same positions to be on campus and to be present. And so we’re trying to find engagement strategies that meet our students virtually. I look back at what the First Year Center did with Bear Beginning, sending things home specifically to our communities that were living at home to make sure that they felt invested and engaged, even though they weren't in the residential colleges. And so we'll continue to find mechanisms to outreach to our remote students. But I wanna reemphasize that many of the events, as we said, because we’re on orange, we’re in this restrictive pattern where we’re not having many in person events. And so a lot of this will be virtual opportunities to get engaged. If you go to that link that has been put in the chat box earlier to the student group organizer you'll find many of the events and activities that are going in place are online and virtual.

Reggie Gacad: Thank you. Rob, I have a couple of questions coming in asking about how our students are responding or maybe upholding our guidelines. So how is the university addressing large gatherings of
students, especially at night, and what are some consequences if students or faculty or staff members do not follow the University public health rules?

Rob Wild: Yes, I did see that question in the Q&A and somebody was referring to the very wonderful Instagram site that's been created called, I think it's called Covididiots. I have seen it. You know, this one is tricky, right. I am all for students holding students accountable. I think students are gonna hold each other accountable to our public health expectations in a much more effective way than someone in my or Kawanna or Kirk's position, sending emails or messages about compliance. And so on one hand, I'm all for that, level of public accountability.

The public shaming, that's not good. We don't want that in that site. We don't want that anywhere. And I think what has happened unfortunately is and to be perfectly honest with you, we've been talking to our colleagues around the country who opened it ahead of us. Thank you, somebody just texted me. It's called WashU Covid Idiots, if you want to actually look it up yourself. But the, you know, what we're seeing at WashU is very common to what other universities have experienced, where you have a group of students who are very rightly concerned about safety, is that we all should be and they wanna make sure that their classmates are following the rules because they are following the rules. And we have other students who are making mistakes and learning about what our expectations are. Many of our students haven't been in a college environment and it takes a little bit of time to get used to these new expectations. And so we've experienced that here.

I would say that most of the violations that Kawanna and I have been trying to address, I would put in the more minor categories, students forgetting to wear their masks and putting them on when reminded. People violating a guest policy and our resident advisor staff having to remind them about our guests policies. We have had several cases of more egregious violations that have been quickly addressed through the student conduct process. We had about 10, what I would call more serious cases that we adjudicated last week. We have not expelled or suspended any students but as Kawanna and I said in a letter that I know you all read very carefully when you received it and your students received it on August 24th, we are going to take egregious violations very seriously. And if they are happening in a way that are putting student at risk, we will address it. An example of an egregious violation, of course, would be a student who is COVID positive, who we find has left their isolation housing and put themselves in contact with other students.

We have created a special reporting platform that we would much prefer students use instead of social media or other public shaming sites. Again, I might ask that someone put it in the chat, it's the COVID Concerns Portal, and any member of the community can log in and share a concern that they see. We will certainly try to address it if we can. I think what I predict is going to happen here because this is what's happened at many of our peers institutes, is it just takes a couple of weeks for everybody to start feeling comfortable with this new environment and what's expected for us to be successful. And so I'm hopeful that as we get into the semester a little bit more as our public health and student health ambassadors continue to do their great work and that your students continue to help us, that we will get to a place where we have a good shared understanding about our community expectations.

Reggie Gacad: I have a quick clarifying question. Should students remain masked and socially distant from folks that they may live with, such as suite-mates et cetera?

Kirk Dougher: That's kind of an interesting question and it raises some difficulties. I know it's been on and I noticed in the Q&A that has been on the hot topics list. Our infectious disease experts are recommending
that the students kind of consider the degree to which they are comfortable with various exposure. So the phrase is poding. If they're sharing a suite with other students, in some ways they wanna be able to make sure that they're comfortable with the risks and how conservative there are other students suite-mates have been with regard to COVID. So in other words with each exposure, with each thing that they're doing, it increases that risk of being able to contract it and really the preference is for them to be as safe as they feel like they need to be. So in some instances, they're well aware of that their suite mates have been quarantining themselves without restriction and they've made sure that they're going to be safe and others they're a little less certain. So we've encouraged students to be able to weigh those risks and if they feel like poding with their suite-mates and feel comfortable with that, then that's something that they wanna be able to evaluate the risk of, otherwise we're strongly encouraging them to be able to keep their masks on and keep social distance and take precautions as the public health measures have guided. I apologize Kawanna.

**Kawanna Leggett:** Nope. We were gonna say the same thing.

**Reggie Gacad:** For all three of you to think about. We have some family members who are worried about approaching their students when in a situation where they may be feeling isolated or lonely, we know that like moving to college in and of itself or starting college in, in and of itself can be a lonely experience compounded upon like the current situation that we have. So how might the University address students who are feeling isolated or lonely, are students given an opportunity to engage with people, whether they may be RAs, staff, or faculty or are there first steps that family members may choose to share with their students as they start recognizing that they may be feeling lonely or isolated?

**Kawanna Leggett:** We recognize that this is certainly not how we would have wanted to start the semester but I look at the experience that our first year students just had with their WUSAs which are orientation leaders. They were able to connect with small groups, our RAs had floor meetings. And so there was lots of opportunity for students to get to know folks. But that's still not the normal experience that we typically have. I can tell you I've been on campus many times since we've opened and students are finding their ways. They are walking in groups, large groups and we've had to remind them about some of the distance but they're finding their ways to find their people. I will say this week will also be a moment where they get to know people beyond just who they live with. With classes beginning and classes starting and engaging. And we're also getting more of our student activities and groups gearing up. And so if you find that your student is struggling in any way to get involved, I wanna reiterate the resources that we have within residential life, with our RAs, who are top leaders in our community. All juniors and seniors who've been through their first year experience and sophomore experience and have the opportunities to get them connected to things on campus. And then the WUSAs continue to have an opportunity to connect with the students as well. We know that coming to our University is hard in any circumstance and then you add this more isolating experience that they're having. So if you have any folks that are struggling, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself and we'll get them connected appropriately.

**Reggie Gacad:** Thank You.

**Rob Wild:** I just wanna add one quick thing in terms of what you can be doing to help us with this as parents. And this is hard. This question breaks my heart, just cause I know that students every year, whether we’re in a pandemic or not, this is the lonely week, right. So this, you’ve left. All the orientation activities are over. This is the week where it really starts sinking in for students that, wow this is my new normal. This is my new life. My high school friends that I made are off at their own experiences and sort of doing their own
experiences. And so this is a hard couple of weeks. And this is also a time as Kawanna mentioned earlier that we have lots of opportunities for students to engage. And I know a lot of it's virtual, but this is the time if you're interested in one of our many student organizations, the WUGO website that that was posted in the chat is a really important place to suggest to students because there's a lot of students like this that are looking for their group. The thing that they're interested. Sometimes it's something they were interested in high school. Sometimes it's something different and this is the time. And it takes time. Every student finds their place at their own pace. Some will take actually until the spring semester to find their pace. Some found it eight minutes after they got here. And I think that, that is normal. And what you can be doing is encouraging your students to find that one thing that they try, put themselves out there. And I know it's harder in this environment, but those opportunities still exist.

**Reggie Gacad:** If a student were to leave St. Louis for the weekend, are they able to return to WashU?

**Rob Wild:** That's a great question. So if you look at our COVID travel policies, we are recommending for the safety of campus that all essential travel or non-essential travel be limited. We also recognize that we're not gonna be able to control this for all of our students. And so we would just ask that, you know, that you as parents find ways to keep your students here. We're gonna be making some announcements related to Thanksgiving as we said we would at the end of September about whether we feel that people who travel home should return to campus. A lot of that will be based on what we predict will be the conditions here in St. Louis and nationally around that time. But for now as much as you can keep your students here and you're reading between the lines correctly, that this is a very difficult policy to enforce, that creates a safer environment for everybody.

**Reggie Gacad:** Thank you. We're going to ask one last question for the evening. Panelists thank you so much for the information that you've shared tonight. Kawanna, Kirk and Rob what is one last piece of information that you would like to leave our families with?

**Rob Wild:** You're gonna make us go in the same order that we started, Reggie. Okay. I'll just go back to my opening comment about the relationship that you have with your student. This is a challenging time. You're forming a new relationship with your adult child but this is an exciting time. This is a transition to a new lifelong bond that you will have with your child as an adult. And, you know, I know there's ups and downs, but the more you can relish from they're experiencing, celebrate with them their accomplishments, support them when they're struggling. This is all part of the experience and my advice is, again, relish in this change, don't try to fight it. I've seen many, many people come out on the other side of this. Dr. Dougher is one, some other time you can talk to him about the relationship he has with his college graduates, but it will be okay. And that's my advice.

**Kawanna Leggett:** I would just say, this is a partnership we care just as much as you all that our students are having a positive and safe experience. And so there are many staff working night and day to ensure that we can support our communities and provide as much support during this very difficult time. And so, you know, it's a lot about extending grace to our students knowing that they're eager to be back and they wanna stay here too. And our staff who are supporting them. And so it really is a partnership if you or your student are struggling in any way, certainly reach out to us so that we can talk through that but we are here for your students and we're gonna support them as much as possible. And just listen to the concerns that come up. And I just wanna thank everyone because this is not going to be easy but we are in a place that cares about our students. And we've created a culture of care that will extend beyond this pandemic that we're in right now. And so I do wanna just extend some thanks but just offer that we're here for you to partner and we
wanna listen and learn. And we also just wanna be honest about what we can and what we can't do during this time that we're on this orange alert system that we're on right now.

**Kirk Dougher:** My comments are kind of a combination of the two previous comments, interestingly enough. One, the people that are working here and especially the folks that I have much more contact with in the medical services and student affairs really care about your students in ways that I just can't explain that they work themselves really hard, they care, as Kawanna said deeply about making sure that the students are really safe and we are doing our best to be able to make sure that we're keeping the campus community safe in general and individuals in specific. And a lot of things that we're doing, I would just ask some grace for, as we try to make sure that we're standing them up and getting them taken care of. In addition to your students going through a transition period, as Dr. Wild mentioned, I also would share that you as parents are going through a transition and given all the stress and difficulty of COVID and the pandemic in general, it's different for you as well. It's your worries your concerns get asked to exacerbated through students going off and where we feel so little control over the world and the events that are happening around us it's nice to have some measure of control. And yet when our students are leaving us it feels like we've lost some of that again. So I would encourage you to also be benevolent with yourselves and be patient with how you're feeling about the responses that you're having at this time because for parents it is a new piece where our students are going away, engaging in this indiavuation process and that impacts us. I, you know, as Dr. Wild mentioned that, you know, my two older ones, when my son went away to college, I was so happy for him to be leaving. I was like Rob's mom was when he left, when my daughter left, that was a whole different story. And I was not quite ready for her to leave. And you've gotta learn to be able to accept and be okay with the feelings that you have associated with all of this. And that's just a struggle that we have.

**Reggie Gacad:** Panelists thank you so much for speaking with us tonight and sharing these important insights and resources. Parents and family members we hope that you found today's session helpful in getting your questions answered and to hearing more. You can find the recording of this Town Hall at families.wustl.edu later this week. And if you have additional questions we encourage you to email families.wustl.edu. Thank you all so much for joining us and have a great rest of your night.