

## Weekly Recap from the Vice President of Student Life

September 25, 2020

Happy Friday, students!

First things first, I want to commend the vast majority of you for your diligence and conscientiousness. As you've likely seen, the latest saliva tests and wastewater analyses [continue to show little or no coronavirus](#) on Palatine Hill. Keep it up!

As always, use your face coverings, practice good hygiene, and maintain your social distance. For the few of you who aren't following protocols or responding to mandatory testing when required: we need your compliance to keep the entire community safe. Please don't wait until you're contacted by Student Rights and Responsibilities to do the right thing.

This week I want to use this space to flush out, if you will, the complexities of [effluent testing](#). Effluent testing is an emerging science. The application of effluent testing to epidemiology and public health is even more nascent. And the use of effluent testing in higher education is truly groundbreaking. All that is to say this: we're learning. With every set of samples taken and results analyzed, we're getting a better understanding of the benefits and limitations of effluent testing. It's one tool in our belt, and we believe it's a worthwhile tool, at that.

One benefit of effluent testing is as an early-warning system of sorts. Currently we pull two 24-hour samples each week. Samples go to a laboratory at Oregon State University, which analyzes the material collected and provides that data back to us within 48 hours, on average.

Coupled with contact tracing done by our new full-time staff member, effluent testing can help us identify potential "hotspots" and take quick mitigation actions.

A limitation of effluent testing is, somewhat ironically, its sensitivity. Wastewater can still test positive for COVID even if a student in a residence hall has previously had COVID and is no longer infectious, but who is still shedding virus into the effluent stream. This sensitivity is also one reason why we direct students not to enter residence halls other than their own, and not to have visitors from outside their hall, as doing so may contaminate the sample at that site.

We're doing well, and it's because students, staff, and faculty are each doing their part, staying vigilant, and following all of the [necessary health and safety precautions](#). To that end, I urge you to get your flu shot. Reducing the incidence of the flu on campus will help keep health and wellness resources available for other needs, including any COVID-19 cases that may arise.

Health Service held its first flu clinic this morning. If you weren't able to make it to that one, there's another flu shot clinic scheduled for Monday, Oct. 6. Please check your email for the message from Health Service.

Have a safe weekend. And, as always, WeB4Me@LC.

Sincerely,  
Robin H. Holmes-Sullivan  
Vice President of Student Life and Dean of Students