



POLICE DEPARTMENT

Public Safety

January 15, 2021

Dear Clemson Students:

When a South Carolina health department headline this week announced the agency's COVID-19 response would shift from "containment to mitigation due to record growth in positive cases," it sounds like an ominous note of our current health situation across the state.

For almost 10 months leaders and community members have asked us to educate ourselves while taking precautions to contain and prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes hand washing, social distancing and mask wearing. Official communications from Clemson's leadership have reinforced this message and articulated why it is important for the health and safety of every student, staff, faculty and community member.

Clemson spared no expense to implement policies and procedures that allowed us to complete the Fall semester when many institutions were forced to revert to fully online classes.

With a tremendous amount of hard work by myriad staff and faculty at all levels of the University, we started our Spring semester with high hopes and a path to accelerate out of the COVID-19 pandemic and transition back to a greater sense of normal. This involved investing in weekly testing for all students, faculty and staff accessing University facilities and significant logistical work to review spaces available for teaching and studying.

Every consideration was examined; every action was undertaken – all to ensure a safe yet enjoyable college experience. All to safeguard the desired increase in student engagement through in-person classes and expanded activities.

Since the semester started, however, we have seen examples that demonstrate some students are not invested or aware of how their behaviors can affect individuals and the

community. How a moment of irresponsibility may jeopardize the objective of being on campus to live and to learn with our friends.

The University's leadership has become familiar with a disturbing video and screenshots of concert goers packed into confined spaces, groups of individuals crammed into vehicles and impromptu gatherings where participants weren't social distancing or wearing masks.

It's important to have the facts so informed decisions are possible. In this case, the facts are indisputable. In the first two weeks of 2021, 45,210 individuals in South Carolina have tested positive for COVID-19. Hospital and ventilator use are up and emergency departments in many locations are overwhelmed.

Because of these facts and our desire to contain the spread of COVID-19, Clemson is continuing its expansive testing program, managing isolation and quarantine spaces, and monitoring behavior that is inconsistent with laws, our Student Code of Conduct and Human Resources policies.

We want you to be safe, healthy and successful. We also want to protect our campus and the surrounding community. We strive to be good neighbors and we have a responsibility to do our part to support strained medical systems around us.

So, the question is how do we move forward?

Last semester we did a tremendous amount of education and followed a measured approach to achieve voluntary compliance. I believe for most students, staff, faculty and visitors we succeeded in achieving this goal.

It was effective, so this has us wondering if the last two weeks were simply an aberration which will be quickly corrected. The University and city of Clemson will continue to work together, utilizing every available tool to ensure that our campus and community aren't harmed through the unlawful and selfish behavior of a few.

We are prepared to implement both civil and criminal penalties, as well as conduct sanctions for those individuals flagrantly violating local, state laws and University directives. These include:

- SC Governor's Executive Order which makes any "gathering" unlawful if it threatens public health.
- Local laws and ordinances for mask wearing and social distancing.
- University Code of Conduct, including fines and sanctions.

No one wishes to resort to enforcement action to gain compliance. And yet, the University cannot stand idly by and watch as individuals, organizations, and businesses jeopardize the health, safety, and success of others.

I have led the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) since March 2020. It includes amazing people from across Clemson's campus who work tirelessly to protect you, tackling the ever-changing landscape of a pandemic. Each member of the EOC brings a sense of positivity and can-do attitude about their work while working tirelessly to ensure the campus is safe.

For the first time in 10 months, this week we saw and heard disappointment and discouragement from the group. When this group of 80 campus leaders saw the pictures and videos of individuals packed into businesses watching a concert or engaging in behavior clearly outside health recommendations, they paused for a second and questioned why. Why would those who we are working so hard to protect compromise our efforts?

This is a legitimate question that I hope each of you will ask yourself. Each of us has the responsibility to hold ourselves and others accountable for actions that risk the overall health and safety of our community.

Be the one!

Be the one to serve as an example to others, call out poor behavior and recognize the positive, have tough conversations with peers, and join together to send a clear message – let's have fun and enjoy the semester while considering the needs of others and the dangers our actions may cause.

Every day, I see the love and compassion for Clemson and what it means to each of you. Don't stop enjoying your life or engaging in activities that bring you joy; however, be mindful of how your behavior impacts the whole and follow the laws, guidelines and directives that have been established to protect us all.

Let's set the example for helping South Carolina and Clemson contain this virus by doing our part to protect our friends, families and community.

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