

To my fellow Huskies:

You did it.

We made it successfully to the finish line of in-person classes this fall.

It wasn't easy, and we were somewhat staggered by the recent rise in COVID-19 cases here and elsewhere in recent days. Challenged as we were by this insidious disease, we marshalled the incredible talents of scholars and staff, the determination of our students, and the resilience of a community that is supportive of each other to meet and respond to each challenge as it arose.

As expected, the virus was present on our campuses from the outset, and there were students and employees who became ill. During the semester, there were times when residential buildings on and off campus were placed in quarantine. Last weekend, our entire residential system in Storrs was quarantined. Each of these actions were part of our strategy to act fast and use the tools at our disposal to halt the spread of the virus when we saw numbers moving in the wrong direction.

And before we go home for a well-deserved break, we are testing all of our residential students and any of our off-campus students who choose to be tested, in order to do all we can to minimize the risk to the friends, families, and communities to which we return. Staff again did heroic work to accomplish this massive testing task, beginning with testing more than 1,000 students over the past weekend, and accumulating to a total of more than 7,000 exit tests as of now.

This past summer, when we decided we would resume in-person classes in the fall and welcome many students back to our residence halls up to the Thanksgiving break, our staff began working virtually (no pun intended) non-stop for months to plan – and to do all we could to help protect the health of our community.

We were cautiously optimistic that here at UConn, we could make it work, but also prepared to pull the plug and abort the plan if necessary. Of course, this was a global pandemic that none of us had ever experienced before. And we were seeing peer institutions closing in the face of massive outbreaks. When the Daily Campus [ran a survey in the second week of residency](#), the over/under for when we would close and go home was around mid-September. I have to confess I did not think they were necessarily wrong.

The reason we did succeed? All of you. Our students, faculty and staff, [who are recognized in this video](#).

The greatest credit for this goes to our students. We can make all the plans and protocols we want, but they are only truly effective if our students follow them. And the vast majority of you did – and not just when it came to quarantines. You got tested, then retested, then tested again. You stayed within your pods. You followed the rules. You wore masks. You maintained distance. You were cautious and you were careful not only for the sake of your own health, but everyone else's, too – including our surrounding communities.

Thanks to you, by and large our positivity rate was low and stable – far lower than the state and the nation. And when there were spikes, we worked together to bring the numbers back down and safeguard our health.

The thing we are happiest about and most relieved by is that everyone at UConn who became ill has recovered or is recovering.

**UConn: You have been a model of how communities can work together to maintain our health and wellness in the face of a global pandemic while carrying on key aspects of our important mission and of a normal life.** You showed each other and everybody else how we can get through it together. And you have given us the blueprint for how to prepare for the spring semester, when we will do it all over again.

While we are relieved by the relative good health of our campuses over the course of the in-person semester – despite a late spike in positives – we are also very conscious of the fact that our state, the nation, and the world are in the midst of a worsening crisis when it comes to the spread of this virus. It is as pervasive as it has ever been, and the public health consequences are dire.

As thousands of our students leave UConn for the break, I appeal to our entire community to be as vigilant as ever. Please don't let your guard down. We know there will be some difficult days ahead, and each of us must do all we can to ensure our continued health, and the good health of our loved ones and communities.

My deepest thanks to all of our students, staff, and faculty for all you have done to get us here. Best wishes for a healthy Thanksgiving, success on the rest of the semester online and on exams, and a well-deserved break. We will see you in January.

Sincerely,

Tom