

Alfred University reacts after employee tests positive for COVID-19

AU: Hornellsville resident was not on campus after becoming symptomatic

ALFRED — The Alfred University campus remains vigilant after an employee tested positive for COVID-19.

The Steuben County Public Health Department on Wednesday confirmed it received notification that three more Steuben County residents tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the total to 11 cases in the county.

Alfred University disputed a press release from the Public Health Department that stated the Hornellsville individual, an AU employee, visited three locations on campus while symptomatic on Friday, March 20 — the McMahon Building, Harder Hall, and the automotive garage.

Del Rey Honeycutt, director of the Alfred University Wellness Center, said while the AU employee did test positive for COVID-19, the employee was not symptomatic while on campus. Honeycutt said the employee was last on campus on Friday and didn't begin exhibiting symptoms until Saturday. The employee then contacted a supervisor, who in turn contacted Honeycutt. The Wellness Center director said the employee has not returned to campus since becoming symptomatic.

“We are really on top of the health and safety of our campus and community,” Honeycutt told *The Spectator*. “If anybody presents with symptoms, they are to notify their supervisor or HR immediately.

They will contact me and medical professionals at the Wellness Center will begin the process of screening and tracking, and communicate with the Allegany County Health Department.”

Honeycutt said the Wellness Center has also been in communication with Steuben County Public Health given that some employees reside in Steuben County.

Starting Monday, all non-essential employees at Alfred University have been working away from their official on-campus work site. The implementation of the telecommuting policy followed a decision last week to suspend on-campus classes and move to online instruction of students for the remainder of the spring semester.

“We’ve been on top of the tracking process for at least two weeks with students, staff and faculty,” Honeycutt said, noting that the university started a travel log to aid in the screening process.

About 60 students who did not have a housing or travel option are still on campus post-shutdown. They are currently scattered in dorms across the campus, but Honeycutt said they will soon be centralized while maintaining social distancing procedures.

Essential staff remaining on campus includes safety/security personnel, some facilities maintenance and custodial staff, Wellness Center staff, limited residential life staff, and personnel caring for animals at the Equestrian Center.

“Everyone is expected to self isolate,” Honeycutt said. “We have grab and go dining options for staff and faculty. We’re all pretty much working from home anyway, but even before we got that directive we were asking people to self isolate if they could, if they had traveled to areas that were hotspots.

“The Wellness Center is still open to students,” she added. “Students have been given many announcements and direction that they need to be self isolating, and if they come up with any symptoms or they feel

like they've potentially been exposed, the Wellness Center is available to consult with the county and to test.”

Honeycutt said several Alfred University employees are in isolation, either by internal procedures or mandated by the health department.

“We're staying on top of it and consulting with the Allegany County Department of Health,” Honeycutt said. “We only have the one confirmed case, but anybody that's potentially been exposed even prior to that has been given guidance to self isolate and everybody has taken directives as such.”

Other new cases

Aside from the Hornellsville resident, the Steuben County Public Health Department said two other new cases are linked. One individual is a resident of the Town of Bath, and one is a resident of the City of Corning.

The individuals are currently being isolated and monitored by the County Health Department. Public Health staff is investigating and identifying close contacts of the confirmed cases and any exposure risks. One or more of the individuals reported visiting the following locations while symptomatic and have been in isolation since. All those known to have direct contact with the individuals at these locations are being notified.

- 3/12 – Old World Café in Corning
- 3/12 – Corning, Inc. Decker Building in Corning
- 3/13 – Fagan's Funeral Home in Bath
- 3/14 – Saint Mary's Church in Bath

Residents, including those who visited the above locations on the days noted, should monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath and contact their healthcare provider for instructions.

“As predicted, increased cases are being reported as more testing has been conducted,” said Public Health Director, Darlene Smith. “Cases will continue to come in as more testing becomes available, but with the continued community effort to stay home, stay safe and limit contact across Steuben County, we hope to see a decline in spread in the coming weeks.”

Also on Wednesday, the Steuben County Public Health Department clarified that the individual noted as visiting Southern Tier Fabricators in Tuesday’s press release visited a project of Southern Tier Fabricators located in Bath.