



**SIERRA NEVADA
UNIVERSITY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Daniel Kelly – Director of Marketing

Phone: 775-881-7422

Email: dkelly@sierranevada.edu

Community protection paramount at Sierra Nevada University

SNU completes its first semester of on-ground classes during the pandemic

[INCLINE VILLAGE, NV, November 20, 2020 —] In a year that has re-written recent history on every level, Sierra Nevada University has successfully navigated on-ground, in-person class offerings without an outbreak of COVID-19. The small university used a combination of virtual classes, daily surveillance, and rapid responses. The result? Over 430 tests, with only two positive cases that resolved in days without further spread.

Returning to Campus – Tests mandatory

With students and faculty returning to campus after a remote start to the Fall semester, everyone was required to test before returning. The initial test of faculty and staff returned zero positives. They were quickly followed by comprehensive testing of the student body. The two off-campus positive tests were immediately quarantined and retested. Their initial tests revealed a low viral load, and their ability to transmit the virus was considered doubtful. Upon retest, they were shown to be negative and deemed recovered.

Not without hiccups – policy violation results in a closed campus

After returning, students (who all had negative tests) attended a local party in the community. Get-togethers of this size and community contacts are not allowed. SNU administration and the daily COVID committee acted swiftly. Campus immediately closed to outside visits, and instruction switched to virtual pending test results. Students living on campus were not allowed to leave, and off-campus students could not come to the university in person. After a new round of testing came back 100% negative, in-person instruction resumed shortly after and continued to the end of the on-ground semester today.

In-person classes end for the holidays

Today, the 20th of November, marks the last day of in-person classes before the Spring Semester. Students have the freedom to travel home to their families and will complete the Fall program virtually. Before returning to on-ground courses in the spring, a negative COVID-19 test result will be required once again.

Of note – Mask wearing, self-surveillance, and student pods work

It has been noted recently that [viral load is significant when it comes to the spread as well as the severity of COVID-19 infections](#). SNU Tahoe students have performed well when it comes to proper mask etiquette on campus and in the community. All building entrances are monitored with sign-ins and temperature checks, and the use of the [Campus Clear app](#) is nearly universal among staff, faculty, and students.

"Our goal is to continue to out-perform other universities – for the sake of our students, staff, faculty, and the safety of our Incline Village Community. This concern preoccupies my mind at all times as a community and institutional member of the Incline Village and greater Basin community," stated Dr. Rob Valli, president of Sierra Nevada University.

Future initiatives

Along with the rapid-testing through university partners, currently, the COVID committee is exploring more robust and cost-effective strategies such as on-site rapid testing capability, wastewater surveillance, and partnerships.

"We are dedicated to having the best practices and capabilities in place to ensure the safety of our students and those in our community," promised Elizabeth Thibodeau, Dean of Student Affairs and chair of the COVID response committee. "In the end, I have to thank our students for their cooperation in keeping us all well."

###

[Sierra Nevada University](#) is Nevada's only accredited private non-profit four-year university. Sierra Nevada University, and the College of Entrepreneurial Leadership in Incline Village, offer a new paradigm of higher education focused on engaged real-world learning through application and the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset across all disciplines – In short, a uniquely valuable hands-on education leading directly to success upon graduation.