

ADAM HOWELL: Welcome. Thank you, everybody, for putting us at our latest all-staff forum. I'm so happy and thrilled that we're able to have this opportunity, again, to bring together our university leaders to go over some information, to get some good information out there, everybody have some questions answered, and hopefully everybody will all leave here better informed and maybe a little bit less anxious about the future.

A few things before we start. I do want to mention that there is some weather out there that we're all aware of. There's some wind, so connections may come in and out. We may have a little bit of instability. We're going to marshal on and press forward and do the best we can. The other thing is that I'm not sure if our video captioner has joined us yet, but regardless, we'll have the recording available, a transcript and the caption, after the fact. So you'll be able to see everything after the fact.

My name is Adam Howell. I'm the chair of the Employee Assembly for the 2019-2020 term, as well as the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences representative on the Employee Assembly. Again, welcome, and thank you to all of our incredible staff for joining us today. I'm not going to take too much time here because I want to get as much good information out to people as possible.

At the outset, I want to mention again, a big thank you to all of our staff, especially our essential staff who were on campus making things work, keeping the lights on and keeping things running; to our Cornell Health, and Weill Cornell Medical staff are on the frontlines. Thank you all so much for everything that you're doing. You truly are a wonderful group of people who are making such a great impact in so many people's lives during this unprecedented crisis, and we can't say enough about how much it's appreciated.

Like I said, I don't want to take too much time. So with that, I will turn it over to our panel. They will all be introducing themselves and making a few brief statements, and then we're going to get into Q&A. So I'll turn it over first to Anne Jones, Director of Cornell, Cornell Medical.

ANNE JONES: Thank you so much. And yes, welcome and a sincere hello to everybody. We wanted to begin with a health update today, considering that so much has evolved in the world and in the scientific and public health literature, in particular, since our last forum.

And I really want to say that despite how difficult this has been for everyone in the past few weeks and months, it has been a change of pace for us all. But we are beginning to see now a slowing of the rate of infection, and that is both nationally and within New York State, and I think that's a glimmer of hope for us at this time.

What we're seeing is that the indicators are that the public health privileges are actually effective. [AUDIO CUTTING OUT]

SPEAKER: What? Are you putting it in right now? Just send it to me.

ANNE JONES: Oh, OK. The strategies of social distancing, that staying six feet away from others, quarantine-- and that is the practice of keeping exposed individuals away from others from getting sick-- and isolation, that is, keeping sick individuals away from others. All of these strategies we think are working.

And the reason that these measures are effective is because of the public health systems and strategies that are in place to protect and safeguard us, and also because of the engagement and involvement of each one of us in implementing these practices for ourselves, for our families, and for our communities. Because of the fact that we as, we have heeded this guidance, we are staying home, we're washing our hands, were avoiding touching our faces, were wearing masks in public now, that is the guidance, and during all of this while our essential workers are coming into spaces to keep us healthy and safe and to keep the community running smoothly. So that's a great glimmer of hope for us at this time.

The latest estimates from the New York State Department of Health show a positivity rate of about 4% in Tompkins County, and I think that that's actually one of the lowest in the state. And this is and will continue to be a great community effort that we're all in together to combat this pandemic. The epicenter of the pandemic, though, is within New York State, as we know in New York City, with the positivity rate there being at about 42%, with over 17,000 fatalities in the greater New York Metro region.

And our colleagues and partners, we know, at Weill Cornell Medicine have been on the frontlines of this fight, and we are especially saddened this week to hear of the loss of an esteemed colleague and physician, a medical director and a member of the Cornell community, who died there tragically this week. It is absolutely a sobering reminder of the impact of this virus and the toll it has taken, especially on the health care community.

So in the past two weeks, several consensus statements have come out of the public health literature and the medical literature, especially with recommendations for reorganizing what would be a reopening of a community as we enter the next phase of this pandemic. And there are several key publications, one from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, another from NYU, another from the Center for Ethics at Harvard, all looking at this from different angles and different vantage points. In general, they all call for certain criteria to be met before we move into a reopening phase, and there are four main criteria.

The first is that we want to see a reduction in the disease counts in the community first for a period of time. The second is we want to scale an availability of rapid testing capacity. The third is we need to have a health care system that is staffed and resourced, complete with enough PPE to care for patients. And the fourth is a public health infrastructure to complete comprehensive contact tracings as part of a test and isolate approach.

So what each of these publications are saying is that the cornerstone to a safe pandemic recovery is through assessing those four main criteria at

the local level and determining an assessment of the local needs, as well as examining what infrastructure is in place for what expansion or scalability there are at the level of the community, not just at the level of the health system or the public health system.

And what the literature calls for is a comprehensive and inclusive process at the community level. What happens there is essentially a risk assessment, where we identify risks, we estimate the likelihood of those risks, and then we take an honest assessment of what the consequences of risks would be, as well as what mitigation strategies there would be.

And the key point with all this is that there is no one pandemic recovery plan that works for every single community or every single entity. Instead, what the latest guidance from the literature is saying is that each community needs to look at its local needs, its local context, and what risks there are, and then take a principled approach to moving forward.

What's actually stated in a lot of this guidance is that instead of thinking about the pandemic that something to recover from, instead what we should be doing is thinking about it as striving for pandemic resilience, which is suggesting that each entity look for a way to bounce back from the impact of the pandemic at all of those levels.

So with that, I want to thank everybody for the support and the gratitude that has been shown to upset Cornell Health during this time. I hope that that was a helpful update with some of the emerging literature at this time, which is both at the clinical practice level and also at the public health level. And again, I'm very thankful for the strong community response. It's a time to feel lucky to be a part of the Cornell community. So thank you very much. I think Joel was going to be the next to speak here.

JOEL: Yes. Thank you, Anne. Let me say how thankful we are for all of your expertise, as well as the expertise of your colleagues. We're extremely fortunate to have the benefit of your insights as we all continue to work through these challenges. I just wanted to touch on a few not just Cornell-specific, but local and statewide planning efforts that are underway.

You all received Martha's message, I think it was last Wednesday, where she talked about the four planning committees that are now underway. These are committees that have the engagement of faculty, staff, and students. It is really around putting our best thoughts together so that when we're in a position to make decisions around how best to restart our campus, that it's coming from the best thinking and the best ideas so that we don't find ourselves in a position of making a decision today and then finding out a week or so down the road that perhaps we should have approached it a little differently.

So within Cornell, these are the planning committees that will advise president Pollack. They are very much underway. They are at various timelines, in terms of when their work should be completed, but the hope would be that that work is done. These recommendations are then put

forward in the June time frame so that we can be in a position to make some announcements soon thereafter about the fall.

Importantly, we are also in a position of having Cornell thought leadership involved statewide. President Pollack has been asked by Governor Cuomo to serve on his statewide restarting New York advisory board. This is something he announced in his briefing yesterday, and Martha was pleased to be able to accept that invitation.

Higher ed sector-specific provost Kotlikoff is one of the co-chairs of a statewide effort led by leaders of both private and public colleges and universities around the state. They will be making sector-specific recommendations to Governor Cuomo around how to restart this sector, which is such an important driver of economic growth, not just in our area but around the region. We want to make sure that when higher ed opens, it's being done as we're doing internally, from a perspective of careful thinking about what needs to be done and in place by the time those decisions can be implemented.

And then here in Tompkins County, I, along with some of my senior leadership colleagues, are part of an effort of local leaders, talking about how to restart the County, working quite closely, not just with our health care leaders in the Tompkins County health departments and Cayuga Medical Center, but all of the various municipal leaders, business leaders, nonprofits, as we think about how working with our higher ed colleagues at Ithaca College at TC3, we can all give the best thought about how to bring our economy, our community back together. So with that, I'm happy to now turn it over to Ryan, who will speak a bit from his perspective.

RYAN LOMBARDI: Thanks, Joel. Hi, everyone. This is Ryan Lombardi. I serve as the Vice President for Student and Campus Life here at Cornell. Really great to be a part of this forum, once again, and thanks to the Employee Assembly for putting it on. I also want to add my thanks to the chorus of thanks that have already been offered to all of the staff on campus that are supporting campus and our students, and especially those that are still working on campus and coming in to support them in various capacities. You have our deep gratitude for your efforts. Thank you.

I just want to briefly give you a few updates related to the student experience. I've been engaging, my colleagues have been engaging, quite extensively with students. As you would expect, like for all of us, their experience in this virtual learning environment is quite variable, depending on their own circumstances and depending on how well or easy they're able to adapt. So we continue, and a lot of the staff on campus continue, to work very hard to support those students as they continue their education.

But there's been one very common theme that I've heard from students, and that is a deep expression of gratitude to all of the employees at Cornell who have worked so hard to support them over these weeks and months. And so I just want to make sure that you all hear that, if you don't get the chance to interface with students directly.

I want to let you know about a couple of resources that we're providing to students right now. This is certainly not expansive, but just a couple of highlights. We have started a really robust telehealth option, thanks to our colleagues in Cornell Health, who are able to offer telehealth services to our students across the country, should they need that support, either in medical or mental health care. And that's gotten off the ground and I know it's being well received.

We continue to have and receive lots of requests to support students financially through the Access Fund and the Dean of Students Office. I just want to make sure you all are aware of that resource. And one of the very salient topics on our students' minds, and all of our minds, is related to their careers and the way they're going to spend their summers with internships and other things that may no longer be the option for them. Our career services colleagues in the colleges and the schools and in Student & Campus Life are working very hard to program for them.

One other piece of information that might be helpful to you, we are planning to make housing on campus available to students this summer who still aren't able to go home or don't have a safe home environment to go to. Those students should receive information about the process to apply for that next week.

So if you've got any questions about that, they should be receiving that information directly from our colleagues in residential life and housing next week. I think I'll close there, and again, just add my thanks, and also my sincere well wishes to all of you and to your families in this time. Appreciate you very much. And I think Rick is up next, right?

RICK BURGESS: That's where your hand off to me, right? [LAUGHS] Well, thanks, and hello, again, everybody. I hope you recognize me with this little COVID goatee thing I got going. First off, thanks to EA for arranging this, and I really appreciate the opportunity to share what we have going on and keep you posted on developments. I want to add a shout-out to all the personnel who've been on campus, continuing to support the central functions.

It's a little spooky when you go to campus. I've been going down at least a couple of times a week, just to keep an eye on things occasionally, and it is very much a ghost town. You see people out walking, but you don't see all the normal activity, and it's definitely odd. So I think we're all looking forward to seeing that level of activity restored.

Joel mentioned the discussion, or the groups that are starting on this restart planning. So on the facility side of the house, we are looking at two aspects, in particular. The first is restarting our construction projects. So we have gotten the go ahead from the state to restart construction. We are doing a local review of which projects we actually proceed with, and as we select those high priority projects we are notifying contractors. We're asking them, before they go back to work, to provide updated health and safety plans, and we're verifying that those are thorough and appropriate, and then we are having our construction managers follow through to make sure that they actually abide by those.

COVID introduces a new risk, but construction is full of risks already, and health and safety on a construction project is really about understanding the type of risk and how to mitigate it appropriately, and then making sure that those control measures stay in place and are effective. So essentially, COVID gets added to that list of risks to be mitigated as we move on with those.

So that actually has already begun and we're seeing projects restart. The NCRE project re-mobilized and is back to work as of Monday, so that's very encouraging. And we did lose a little time, but we're not too far off track, as Brian's paying very close attention every word I say about the status of the NCRE schedule. And it's still not clear, for this and for others, what the level of disruption will be with respect to supply chain and that kind of thing. So that's going to have to be worked through project by project as we deal with our contractor partners.

The other aspect that we're working on is restarting facilities. And what we did, if you recall last time, I talked about hibernating fume hoods, setting back energy settings in buildings so that we would reduce the energy expenditure if we're not going to be using the building to its full purpose. And so we're now looking at, what do you have to do to restart all of that? And make sure that we have got that sequenced well, that we're thinking through all the various aspects of getting a building up and running when there's nobody in a building.

Buildings are designed to be occupied, and when they are, you have people that pay attention and say, hey, this doesn't sound right, or that doesn't look right. They call that in we stay on top of things. When people are out of a building, stuff can go wrong without you knowing about it, and so we want to make sure we get a good, thorough look as we get in and get restarted.

We're also looking at other things, like mail delivery. And I know folks are thinking about how do they get their labs up and running, the research efforts up and running, what materials and supplies do they have to order. And so there's going to be a coordination effort to make sure that as supplies come in, some cases, the building that you may be in there's nobody else there.

There's nobody up and manning the loading dock. There's nobody to receive those things. Our transportation services have filled the breach in the interim, but we're not going to be able to accommodate all that stuff showing up. So we've got a little bit of a coordination to make as people make plans on restarting labs and restarting their operations in a staged manner.

So we're engaged in that planning. And what I anticipate we're going to do is to have a fairly consistent checklist of activities that we want to make sure are done, that will then have to be customized to two different facilities and different specific activities. So I will be reaching out to facilities personnel, facility directors, building coordinators, and I'm going to ask you all to engage with folks in your units and your departments to match up the general with those specifics. So look for that in the coming couple of weeks as we work on that.

I think that's the big step for me right now. I really just appreciate everybody's hard work. It's been very impressive to see how rapidly folks have adapted to this. I think we're all fortunate that we have an employer who is really striving mightily to keep everybody aboard, and certainly not everybody, not all of our neighbors are so fortunate. And so really excited to shift my planning and our planning to restart activities to get back to business. So with that, I'll pass it to Joanne DeStefano.

JOANNE DESTEFANO: Thanks, Rick, and good afternoon, everyone. It's so great to be back to see you, and I'm looking forward to the day where we actually can be in person instead of looking at videos. I'm getting tired of looking at my computer screen. As you might expect, there's been two significant areas that we've been focused on.

One is financial modeling of various scenarios and the second one is the planning for a safe reopening of the University. I do want to say, since our last time that we met as this group, the financial projections have not changed. I know Martha put out a note last week, but all of the numbers in the various scenarios have pretty much remained the same.

What we're doing now, though, is we're trying to model and plan for what our likely cases are going to be and what our worst case would be. We can't wait to find out if we have a worst case to do worst case scenario modeling. So I know some of you may be concerned to some of the questions we may be asking as we're doing our financials scenarios, but it's really just for us to get ideas. We'll talk about things and then we'll scrap them, and the more we talk to all of you, the better ideas and the more we can fine-tune what our real strategy is going to be to solve our budget problems.

That's the not so fun part of the job, but the real fun part now is actually thinking about reopening the campus. And there's some great committees that are formed, and I have the opportunity to lead the Research and Operations Committee. And we have a number of faculty, grad students, and staff on the various committees we've made, subcommittees, out of the research and operations. Rick is leading one for the facilities.

Emmanuel Giannelles and Kathryn Boor are leading the research startup. Pat Wynn is leading the non-student living student activities restart of the campus. And then Mary Opperman is leading the workforce reentry planning.

So those are the two areas that I've been focused on. I just want to thank everybody else, as everyone else has. Cornell Health has been amazing. Our health folks in environmental health and safety have been amazing, Christine Stallman and Frank Cantone. And then all of you adjusting to a new work life has just been amazing. And with that, I know we'll come out of this stronger. We'll still have some tough times, but we will be a stronger university in the end. With that, I'd like to turn it over to Mary Opperman.

MARY OPPERMAN: Thank you, Joanne, and thank all of you for joining us. This is actually my fourth time in an open forum with all of you, and I appreciate that many of you continue to come back and participate in this kind of an exercise. So I'm going to try to go quickly through some comments. I know there's a lot of questions.

As everyone else has thanked the EA, they made a choice early on to be visible and present in this conversation, and I think the staff should be very proud of their Employee Assembly. They've done just a fabulous job and are great partners. Thank you to all of you joining. A special shout-out has been said before for our central workers who continue to support us all.

We really are blessed with experts all over the campus who, in the normal course of affairs, sometimes we don't stop to thank, and this is a chance to do that. There are many essential workers around, Cornell Health, Cornell Veterinary Hospital, keeping the utilities going, feeding the students, managing our grounds, our buildings, just keeping us safe. There are just so many. Every time I try to list them, I know I leave people out, but thank you to all of you.

And thank you to those of you who are working remotely. This I know that this has been a challenging way to work from home. And a colleague of mine reminded me that what we're doing right now is working from home during a crisis, which differs in some very important ways from working remotely, so something to keep in mind as we go forward.

I appreciate hearing from so many of you during these difficult times. I actually take it as a gift that you feel comfortable sharing your thoughts and concerns and frustrations with me. I also want to thank you for your thoughtful and conservative use of resources during this time. Your actions, the reducing of our discretionary spend and adhering to our salary and hiring freeze guidelines, are making a difference.

I've said to you before, and I've said often, that this is a novel virus. And for me, this is a novel situation because not only are we facing a health crisis that I don't think any of us have ever seen before, we're also trying to address the financial impact this is having on our university, on our students and their families, on our local community, and on all of you.

President Pollack felt it was very important to remain transparent with all of you and to share our financial situation as we know it. I know that for some of you, that news was sobering in her letter. It really was similar to the information that Joanne shared a while back, but I think sometimes saying it in print can be even more sobering.

And I want to acknowledge that she mentioned that we could not rule out furloughs or layoffs, given the uncertain nature of our situation. So some of you have asked what this means and what we are considering. To date, we have furloughed only a very limited number of employees in places where the revenue to cover those positions has completely dried up and where we were unable to find alternative work. As soon as that revenue returns, we look forward to bringing those people back. We have

had to end some temporary and casual appointments, and in some cases we have not been able to renew a temporary or term positions.

Some of you have asked about some of the other programs that we're looking at, and I would say we have lots of programming on the table. I've gotten a few people that have asked about the shared work program. For those of you who don't know what that is, it's a program where the University reduces the effort of an employee and then unemployment compensation offsets that loss.

We've looked into the program to understand how we might use it, but we have made no decisions as to whether or not is an option that we will pursue. I've also heard from some of you suggesting that we look at other programs, including reducing pay or benefits to help save positions, and providing where we can, voluntary opportunities for individuals.

I want to assure you that all of these options are on the table. So why are we spending so much time considering our next steps and options? I want to recognize, first, that the unknown is very stressful, and there's a lot we just don't know and a lot we aren't in control of, and that creates a lot of stress for all of us.

However, our president meant it when she said that she was doing everything she could to save jobs, so we are being very thoughtful about how we can provide options that do that to the fullest extent possible. We have and will continue to model different options to address this evolving situation. Joanne talked about that. Modeling is a prudent and responsible thing to do, but modeling doesn't mean that we will exercise any individual decision until we know what we're facing.

So please know that we're aware of the stress many of you are facing. I understand why you want to know what we're going to do, and you want to know with certainty. I want to just reiterate that our care, the time we're taking is out of care and concern, and as is the case, we've made the decision to be transparent with you and share with you what we know. And that while I think that has a lot of advantages, it can sometimes seem to create more stress. So I want to acknowledge that and tell you I hear it and I appreciate that you share it with me.

And even though coming back to full operations will be challenging, it's such a hopeful sign that we're beginning to plan. I want to assure you that HR is involved in these plans. We're grateful for the hard work of everyone on those teams, and also to the State of New York for their guidance. And we look forward now to taking your questions and we'll do our best to answer them. I'm turning it back to I think Adam or Hei Hei.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

ADAM HOWELL: Go ahead.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Yup. So let's begin. We've collected some questions from staff members offline and then through the Q&A, so this will be a toggle between both. Can you take some time to discuss how furloughs and layoffs affect benefits such as retirement, health insurance, the Cornell

Children's Tuition Scholarship, et cetera. Would furloughed staff be eligible for these benefits?

MARY OPPERMAN: So let me just try to set out what the different options are. So when someone is furloughed, that's a short-term layoff between two periods of employment. We have made the decision where we can, for ongoing staff, to continue their benefits. So they will continue in the benefits that they were enrolled in, except for those that are salary-dependent. So that will include all of the benefits that they are currently enrolled in.

Programs like shared work, if we were to do that, shared work is the same. We would continue the benefits because they would remain on payroll, albeit not for full-time, if we were to go in that direction. And then it would depend on the other circumstances as to whether benefits would continue. So lots of different iterations of what happens with benefits.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. Ithaca College announced a plan on April 13th to begin reducing the size of its workforce through voluntary steps, including a one-time early retirement incentive. Is Cornell looking at any incentives to encourage early retirement?

MARY OPPERMAN: We are looking at everything and we have taken nothing off the table, so more to come on that. I will say that as we look at them, we do the cost benefit analysis of each program so that we are both being as open as possible to programs that we think will be helpful to staff, but also ones that respond to the very real financial situation that we have. But right now, everything is on the table. We're looking at everything.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. This question is for Joanne DeStefano. As the chair of the Committee on Research and Operations Reactivation, can you provide some information on what metrics you will use, inclusive of federal and state guidelines, to determine when to reactivate our research and related campus operations? Is there a general timeline for decision-making?

JOANNE DESTEFANO: So the three committees that were established have three different deadlines. The Research and Operations Committee that I'm working on, our reports are due May 15th. Our reports will go to the Provost Committee, where they're looking at the startup of the University.

In the Provost Committee, they're looking at two pieces of it. One, the health of what obligations we need to follow as we open up the committee, or open up the University, and the other is on the teaching and student life. The health aspects will evaluate whether it's testing before you come to work or contact tracing or other types of tests. Their recommendations are due by June 15th. So most likely, decisions on what's going to happen in the fall will come together after the June 15th date.

We are paying very close attention to the federal guidelines and New York State guidelines, and also, we would probably customize-- and Anne can

probably answer this one better than me-- of what we feel is the risks on our campus, and then we would set our own standards at that time.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. In Martha's COVID update, you mentioned an estimated \$145 million in additional financial aid. How is this \$145 million calculated? When will we get a sense of the actual financial impact?

JOANNE DESTEFANO: So I can take that one. So a person by the name of Dan Robertson in our Institutional Research & Planning organization has been modeling our financial aid expenses for quite some time, and he has decades worth of data. And the one thing that is true is financial aid costs tend to run along with unemployment. So the projections for financial aid are based on projected unemployment rates over the next couple of years.

And there's such a tight correlation that that's where we can predict this year will be different than other years, and that we would normally know what our financial aid costs are for the incoming class by August, but given the fact that people's economic situations are changing, we expect quite a bit of waiver requests. So we may not know what our real fiscal year 2021 costs will be until partway through the fall semester.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. Several peer Ivy League institutions have turned down federal CARES Act funds to support students. Given the anticipated increased financial aid demands, will Cornell University turn down federal CARES Act funds?

JOEL MALINA: I can handle that. Just for everyone's benefit, the CARES Act had a number of components. A lot of attention in the press has been focused on the Paycheck Protection Program, which is a fund where small businesses are able to apply for forgivable loans.

What we are talking about in this question is a separate fund called the Education Stabilization Fund. This was included in the legislation that was enacted earlier this spring as a way to help all colleges and universities around the country address some immediate emergency needs on the part of their students.

This wasn't funding that anyone applied for. We were essentially able to look at a very extensive list of every college and university. And there was a formula that Congress established, which, appropriately, was focused on a consideration of how many low income students an institution has. I think 75% of the allocation was based on Pell grants students, and Cornell has the largest number of Pell Grant students in the Ivy League. 25% of the allocation was based on student population, and again Cornell is the largest.

So according to that formula, we were allocated \$12.8 million. I should say that there are very specific limitations, in terms of how and when and for what you can use those funds for, and those are analyses that are still under way, but we have made clear our intent to use 100% of those funds, to the extent we end up receiving them, to go toward the needs of our students. This goes beyond what the legislation said, which was 50%

should be going toward that, with the other 50% towards more institutional needs. We're really seeing this as a way to help our student population that's in most in need, as they and their families are struggling to get through this crisis.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. Because Cornell is in New York State, prospective students, especially those beyond the Northeast, foreign students might incorrectly think Cornell's Ithaca campus is in the middle of the US pandemic epicenter, when, in fact, Ithaca is far from New York City and has been infected to a far lesser extent. This misconception might affect matriculation decisions. Is the University doing anything to manage this misperception among admitted students but not yet matriculated students?

ANNE JONES: I can take a first stab at that, and others may want to chime in. So our colleagues and admissions in the colleges, and centrally speaking, I know have been communicating rigorously with our students, given that our students can't do what they normally do, which is come for visits and do all those kinds of things. And so I think they're doing a good job of keeping that clarity there.

I do want to let you all know that our best barometer of whether or not our newly admitted students are going to come to Cornell is when they submit their housing deposits and basically sign up to be a part of the housing process. And we are trending ahead of plan from previous years, in terms of the number of students who have already committed to come to Cornell-- new students, new incoming students-- to come to Cornell for the fall.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. Is there any concern about individuals coming to Tompkins County to their summer homes and increasing rates of infections here in this community?

MARY OPPERMAN: I can't tell. Joel, are you still there?

ANNE JONES: He looks frozen.

MARY OPPERMAN: So I think Joel has been working with the local community, and the local community actually has gotten together to try to think about exactly these sorts of things. And if Joel were on, he would be able to tell you more about what they've been doing, but I know they're in regular conversation about the community and about the impending summer changes and the like. I apologize. I can't get do Joel justice on this question.

ANNE JONES: I can jump in, from a public health perspective, and say that that type of strategic approach to reopening a community is part of what is necessary at this time, looking at those various scenarios and risks and benefits, and yes, underscoring the collaborations that are going on with the many entities in the local community to tackle questions just like that. So yeah.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. Many workplaces have realized significant savings, lower energy costs, vast reduction in office space, office

supply usage due to the shift to work from home arrangements. With the additional benefit of reduced pollution from fewer cars on the road, et cetera, for these reasons, the city of Buffalo, for instance, is taking steps to shift to a more permanent work from home footing for many of its employees, even after the virus abates and normal operations resume. Would Cornell consider such a change for staff who are able to work from home to realize similar financial savings and environmental gains over the long run?

MARY OPPERMAN: I am so glad whoever asked that question asked that question. The answer is yes. That's part of the planning, under Joanne's charge, that we're looking at right now. I started my comments by saying, keep in mind that right now we're working at home through a crisis, which differs from ongoing remote work strategies.

So we have a little team in place that's looking right now at ways we might employ a more assertive approach to remote work. We do think that there's opportunities here for us and for our workforce to think about how we interact on the campus and also do our work remotely that can both save in travel expenses and also energy, as well as reduce the footprint on the campus so that we have available space for some of our other academic and research opportunities that will ultimately help us pursue our mission of advancing the public good.

So that's a long answer to a great question, and the answer is, yes, we are. We really do think this time has shown us that we can get a lot of work done this way. And again, keep in mind that we're doing it with really severe limitations about really needing to stay in the home, as opposed to a remote work strategy, which gives more flexibility to us in our movements. So yes.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. What criteria is being used to decide furloughs? Is there general guidance that's being provided to colleges units, i.e. seniority, job performance evaluations, attendance, et cetera?

MARY OPPERMAN: So I'm sorry, I thought I had answered this in my opening remarks, but let me do this again. So let me first of all say that colleges and units are not acting independently to decide furloughs. We have purposely, and under the guidance of the president of the University, made our intention to be very limited in the use of furloughs clear. So we understand where work has dissipated and we understand where the money that pays for those positions has also dissipated. Those conversations occur at the institutional level before any actions are made.

I also want to say one other thing, which is I am so incredibly grateful to be part of a leadership team where the well-being of the staff has remained absolutely at the forefront of every conversation. So as we decide what to do, we are testing each and every strategy against the impact it has on our people. And I feel like sometimes that's hard to share, especially because we're not all together, but it is not just my voice. It is a symphony of voices and all in agreement, and that includes the deans and the vice presidents and the top leadership.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. It seems clear that the actions we have all been taken are successful in reducing the exponential increase in COVID-19 infections and fatalities. Since prior to vaccine, there is no immunity outside those who have survived the virus. Is it likely that reopening nationally will cause a significant resurgence of the pandemic and a threat to our Cornell community?

JOEL MALINA: I'll take that. And let me apologize. I was frozen for a little bit earlier. Thank you. I understand, Mary, you jumped in. But I think the answer to this question is this is really what our planning committee process will bring to the fore. We need to understand, what are the various concerns and possibilities, and how can we then establish various reopening parameters to minimize, if not completely erase, those potential setbacks?

So I think especially our committee and the subcommittee looking at public health implications of restarting will be working closely with our county health department with Cayuga Medical Center to try to understand where those vulnerabilities may be so that we can mitigate them.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you.

RICK BURGESS: I'll just jump in on that one. Sorry, just to add to that one. I think it's important for folks to understand that there is no zero risk scenario. So we and many others are trying to figure out how to at a lower the risk to the point where it's reasonable and life can proceed with an acceptable amount of risk.

But there's no zero risk scenario, and certainly for people whose life situation is now endangered by the fact that they've lost their job, they lost their business and everything, there's plenty of risk to continuing the shutdown. So this is really all about smart risk and smartly balancing things. And just as Anne spoke to the measures that we took, what are the right measures to retain and how long do we retain those going forward and getting to, really, an acceptable trade-off?

MARY OPPERMAN: Before we go on, Anne, did you want to add anything?

ANNE JONES: Well, certainly to underscore the balancing of risk sentiment around this question. And I think that what's emerging in the public health literature is a consensus that there needs to be a strategy that each community develops around either reopening, at what time to reopen, and then what strategy to use to reopen the community so that the number of individuals that are affected are kept at a low rate.

There are various approaches that are being looked at in the literature now, various combinations of using a PCR test, the one that's available now, along with, or in combination with, or sometimes or, the antibody test, that that's the test that's being developed now, and is, with every day, rising in its sensitivity and specificity, precision and accuracy metrics, as more and more developers are increasing quality control.

As those testing options become available, part of the calculation for each community is determining at what point would social distancing measures be relaxed, at the same time rising up an expansive testing capacity that could then determine individuals able to safely enter the environment. And so the question being asked, could there be a risk to individuals of relaxing social distancing requirements before a vaccine is available, the answer to that is yes, there could be.

But part of what a public health reopening approach is is to look at what those capacities are, look at the risks involved, as they're being mentioned, and then determine the right approach for each local community. Again, there is no one cookie cutter approach. There is no one recovery plan that could work for every single community, but it's about looking at what options become available and what becomes right for this community.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. How are classrooms going to be reconfigured when students return to comply with social distancing? Are large classes, such as the one class, is going to be divided into sections?

RICK BURGESS: Well, I'll take a crack at that one, and then maybe Joanne wants to pile on. We don't have the people from the group that are actually looking in that specific topic on this call. Joanne referred to the three committees, and the Operations and Research Committee is not specifically looking at that aspect.

Now, if that other group comes up with particular recommendations that might come over to facilities and campus services to be implemented, then that's how I would jump in, and we have designers that could help with potential design solutions to look at that. So that is something that they are considering. We have some number of classes that meet in large classrooms.

There's been a lot of discussion, just in the recent years since I got here, about gateway classrooms and how we can make them more effective. The prospect of having 500 students in an auditorium, now from a health point of view, isn't very attractive. So I know that other group will be looking at that and how we adjust, pedagogy, and physical setting to account for that.

JOANNE DESTEFANO: Yeah, I agree with what Rick said. So Vice Provost Lisa Nishii is chairing the committee that's looking at the classroom size, and we'll also be working with Ryan's team on even how students, the number of bathrooms available, and such, so more to come on all of that.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. In her email last Wednesday, President Pollack said Provost Kotlikoff, Executive Vice President DeStefano, and Vice President Opperman will provide more details on our financial situation later this week. There was not another similar mass mailing. Is there any update at this time in regards to this update, or can you provide a financial update?

MARY OPPERMAN: So let me start and then I'm going to turn to Joanne. Yes, when we had originally put that memo out, the intention at that point was

to follow up with more detail. What we realized is that rather than give a written update, we felt it was better to do an open forum as a way to both tell you what we know today and also to allow you to ask your questions.

So understand that that may not have been as clear as it could have been, but we got together to try to write something and thought, these are so effective. We called the EA and asked them if they would just sponsor one more. So Joanne, I don't know if you want to add anything.

JOANNE DESTEFANO: No, I totally agree with what Mary just said. The other thing is part of our financial strategy to solve some of the problems has been to go out and issue more debt in the public markets and buy liquidity through more lines of credit and such. And putting out in writing all of our financial issues at a time when we're trying to bring in liquidity to solve our problems at the lowest cost to the University just doesn't feel right. And we are actually going out for some more debt this week before the end of this week. So as Mary said, having this more face to face, in-person Q&A we felt was the right approach.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. Will testing be available for students upon returning for fall? When, how will Cornell coordinate testing, whether for positive cases or antibodies for staff and faculty during the phase of reopening?

RYAN LOMBARDI: I'll start, and then maybe Anne, if you want to say anything. These are all the questions that the committees are examining right now, as have been mentioned. So we certainly know there are challenges and steps that will need to be overcome to welcome our students back in mass. We know that testing is certainly one of those issues that's on the table, so the committees are currently reviewing how that could be done most effectively along the way. But Anne, you want to add anything there?

ANNE JONES: Sure, just to say that, yes, we are actively and rapidly looking at testing options. We at Cornell Health, in particular, are always examining what new tests are becoming available, assessing their applicability to our population, and then implementing them appropriately. We try to use high quality evidence-based, as well as regulatory approvals, to make sure that we're working with the testing that makes most sense, both from a public health strategy, but also for accurate clinical diagnosis. And as Ryan said, the determination of that overall reopening strategy, along with testing, what the approach testing will be will drive those decisions from a principled approach.

RYAN LOMBARDI: And some of the work that the committees are doing is looking at a cadenced approach to returning students to campus, et cetera, so that things, like testing that Anne has just spoken about and this question was about, would be more manageable as well. So all those types of things on the table that are being worked through right now.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. Has there been any conversation in regards to FSA funds that are not able to be used due to COVID? For example, those who have set aside dependent care funds for daycare or summer camps will

not be able to use those funds by the deadline if camps and care centers do not open. Will these individuals lose said money?

MARY OPPERMAN: Thank you for asking that. And just a reminder, on the Flexible Spending Accounts, these are offered but under federal regulations, so we can't make changes to them unless they're permitted by those regulations. On the Flexible Spending Account for medical, currently there is no regulatory assistance regarding those deadlines, so kind of as is on the Flexible Spending Account for medical. But a reminder that \$500 of your unused balance automatically carries over into 2021.

On the Flexible Spending Account for dependent care, we have some good news to report. People can change their dependent care on a go forward basis now, and the money they've already contributed they can submit for expenses with service dates in 2020 and service states through March 15. We've communicated this information to everyone with a Flexible Spending Account for dependent care via email yesterday and explained that they'll have an opportunity to again change back those accounts later in the year when the their child care needs change back.

So I will say that Gordon Barger, our head of benefits and administration, gave me this update this morning and said that people are already responding and completing the required paperwork. So if I just take a minute to thank Gordon and his team for staying on this and getting it out to people. We hope this will be helpful.

ADAM HOWELL: So it looks like that's about all the time we have. I just want to really briefly say how much we appreciate all of you coming here today and fielding these questions and being so open and transparent with all of us. I want to thank everybody on the Employee Assembly and everybody who helped put this together. And with that, Mary, I'd like to turn it over you, if you have any closing remarks, and just thank you once again.

MARY OPPERMAN: Well, thank you, Adam, and thanks again to the EA and to all my colleagues who come to these open forums and answer all the really hard questions. Just a final set of remarks to all of you for everything that you've done and have been doing, I don't think I could have imagined, in March, that we would be where we are today in our country and in our world. And I feel like sometimes we get lost in the stress and the unknown, and then every so often, someone does something just remarkable, gives back to people, or puts out something with some beautiful music or something that says we're still here and we're going to be OK.

And so my final comment to you is we're going to be OK. It's a tough time. We're working our way through it. There's a lot of people working really, really hard. We're going to be all right. So keep your optimism and your resilience. Reach out to people who help you when you feel a little lost or down, and know that we see you. We care about you. We appreciate you. So that's it for me. Thank you.

ADAM HOWELL: Thank you, everyone, and have a great rest of your day and a great afternoon.