



Knowledge that will change your world

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 11, 2021

To: State Finance Director

From: Bob Phillips, Executive Director, GuideSafe™ Testing

Re: Testing for Alabama and GuideSafe™ Program Progress Report for February

During February, the GuideSafe™ Testing program continued to provide active sentinel testing services to participating colleges and universities in the state of Alabama. Our team has observed and been encouraged by the declining positive case volumes across the country. Though the overall COVID-19 outlook has become more cautiously optimistic, we have maintained regular dialogue with participating schools to continue encouragement of solid participation rates for sentinel testing. Year to date through February, our program has conducted over 150,000 COVID-19 tests. During February, our team processed almost 17,000 test samples, with three of the four weeks in February registering over 4,300 tests per week. The other week, from February 15 through February 21, our volumes were slightly lower due in part to winter weather issues that led to class cancellations at multiple participating schools. Among the asymptomatic campus populations that we test, we saw statewide positivity rates decline consistently week over week (declining from **0.77% positive** at the beginning of the month to **0.41%** to **0.35%** to **0.25% positive** the last week of the month), with those encouraging trends continuing into March.

In addition to our testing performance, our partners in the UAB Department of Pathology were able to employ genetic sequencing instrumentation provided through GuideSafe™ to begin tracking the presence of emerging COVID-19 variants, such as the “British” variant (B.1.1.7), in Alabama. This provides a necessary and impactful research opportunity and can help the state adjust appropriately to the impact of the inevitable virus mutations and variations.

As we enter March, we will be working with our participating schools to adjust testing schedules and expectations around Spring Break and plan for our work through the end of the Spring Semester.