From the Public Health Advisory Group: BingFlex/In-Person Instruction and SARS-CoV-2

February 9, 2021

As we begin the Spring 2021 semester, we wanted to provide the campus community information about classroom instruction amid the pandemic. We reviewed the data for SARS-CoV-2 at Binghamton University for Fall 2020. Testing and tracking of the virus came from two sources: (a) Surveillance testing of asymptomatic individuals (i.e., faculty staff, and students) who were physically present on campus and (b) Diagnostic testing at the Decker Health Services of symptomatic individuals. The number of students enrolled in courses, the number of positive SARS-CoV-2 cases, and the number/type of classes (Distance Learning or BingFlex/In-Person) were modelled. The analysis showed that the number of SARS-CoV-2 cases for BingFlex/In-Person courses was less than what we would expect to have occurred at random. In other words, participation in BingFlex/In-Person courses did not appear to be associated with the occurrence of SARS-CoV-2. Likewise, analysis of shared characteristics among cases did not reveal any clustering based on classroom location. Consequently, our review of campus-based evidence strongly suggests that participating in BingFlex/In-Person Instruction did not increase risk of viral spread.

The strategies that we used to reduce the spread of the virus over the past year will continue to be critical factors for maintaining a healthy campus this Spring. Remember:

1. Wear a mask
2. Wash your hands
3. Watch your distance

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found that COVID-19 outbreaks on college and university campuses can be controlled or minimized by

1. Aggressive testing for people with symptoms
2. Screening of asymptomatic persons
3. Timely contact tracing of positive tests
4. Early and adequate isolation and quarantine
5. Communicating strategies for preventing the spread of infection

The Public Health Advisory Group will continue to monitor data trends, review current research and best practices, and make recommendations for our campus based on CDC and NYS guidance for colleges and universities. Working together, we can keep our classrooms safe for learning.

Public Health Advisory Group

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