

features

AU students embrace a new normal in the spring semester

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As students returned to campus for the spring semester, it was unclear whether coronavirus guidelines would become stricter or remain the same.

While waiting for campus-wide Covid-19 test results to come back, professors were encouraged to hold classes in a virtual setting and on-campus dining was take-out only.

The deciding factor for the tone of the spring semester laid on the number of positive test results that would come back.



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The spring semester has opened new doors for the events and meetings that can be held in-person. As of right now, there is still a maximum capacity of 50 people in an area big enough to accommodate 6-ft social distance.

Now halfway through the spring semester, AU students are accustomed to the way campus runs in the middle of a pandemic. Students have adjusted the way they volunteer, attend class, and maintain mental health.

“We decided if we were in the single digits, we should be able to go back to the fall conditions prior to Thanksgiving,” Robert Pool, vice president of student affairs said. “Not only were we in single digits, we were in low single digits.”

Pool, Rick Ewing, vice president of operations and planning, and the Ashland County Health Department were tasked with making the decision to resume previous guidelines.

makes those decisions,” he said.

Students now have a general understanding of how campus life ensues in the midst of a pandemic. With this, comes having to adjust in various ways.

Abby Wilhelm, president of AU-Givs, learned firsthand the importance of being flexible and implementing creative ways to adjust to the times.

“We did virtual senior citizens Zoom which was kind of a chal-

lot of doors for us as far as what we can do because when you’re limited to 10 people that obviously puts some restraints on how many people we can serve and how many blankets or toys we can make,” Wilhelm said.

Members of AU-Givs have also found that some of their community partners are more willing to accept volunteers this semester than they were in the fall.

“People are getting more com-

do not need the extra push amid Covid-19.

“People who really love to serve will do anything to make that their priority and find a place for it in their life no matter what it looks like, even if it’s virtual, even if it’s with masks and social distancing,” she said.

This semester, AU-Givs plans to bring back two of their events they could not do in the fall — serving food at the breakfast

can only do at college?” Hlavaty questioned. “I would say yes, but obviously it’s not anywhere near the same magnitude as it used to be.”

After receiving the news about low positivity rates in Covid-19 tests, Hlavaty is hopeful this means the campus is on its way back to normalcy.

“Obviously you still have to be safe and I think to a certain level we have to continue doing what we’re doing but as time moves on, I’m hoping that we’ll be able to relax those more and allow clubs and groups to be able to meet even more freely,” he said.

Although Student Senate has brought up the conversation of loosening Covid-19 restrictions, Hlavaty said that is not their primary concern.



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Students have adjusted to wearing masks and social distancing within the classroom setting.

While some may be hopeful knowing that the university is operating under familiar conditions, others may still be affected by a college experience that is undoubtedly different.

The biggest concern Pool has faced since the installation of Covid-19 guidelines is confusion among students regarding how the rules must be followed.

“I think initially there were just a lot of questions like ‘what can we do, what can we not do, who

lenge because senior citizens aren’t always technologically inclined,” she said. “We also did a lot of things you can do in your own dorm room like making Christmas cards or just dropping off non-perishable foods.”

Similar acts of service like these ones will be organized this semester too, in part thanks to regulations that remained the same.

“It definitely just opens up a

fortable with exactly how the spread of Covid works and so we’re definitely noticing that community partners are opening up their doors a little bit more for us,” Wilhelm said.

As president, Wilhelm has done what she can to keep her members engaged and enthusiastic about community service. She believes, however, that students who are passionate about serving

center and replay for kids, which involves making toys for disabled children.

They will also continue with senior citizen Zoom calls and donating food to the Matthew 25 Outreach Center, Wilhelm said.

The members of AU-Givs are determined to make more creative ways to enhance how students can give back this semester.

“Our government and military relations team is actually going to do a monthly card making for encouragement or holidays and they’re going to pick a different organization each month,” she said. “One month it might be the military, another it might be the fire or police station.”

Student Senate President, Josh Hlavaty, has seen the Covid-19 guidelines on campus give the student body a sense of resilience, specifically within the classroom setting.

“Instead of breathing like you have your whole life, you’re breathing a little bit less air which has been proven to affect the way you’re going to bring in information,” he said. “I think it shows resilience in the fact that students are willing to do that.”

Hlavaty acknowledges that while AU has been able to remain face-to-face in many aspects, the college experience has changed.

“Are people still able to enjoy themselves and do things you



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AU-Givs is one of the many campus organizations that has had to make a change in the way they host events. This semester, the organization was able to create more opportunities for volunteering in person such as this blanket making event for veterans.