

21 September 2020

Dear USAFA Parents,

In my final week as Superintendent of the United States Air Force Academy, I would like to provide you with one last update on our efforts as an Academy community against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, and our current status as we navigate a unique fall semester. Any subsequent communication on this issue will come from my replacement, Lieutenant General Rich Clark, who looks forward to connecting with our incredible community of USAFA parents, family, friends and supporters in the near future.

First, I would like to reiterate that my top priority and that of our entire Academy leadership team is the health and safety of our Cadet Wing and the greater USAFA community. Our decision making processes continue to be informed by the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, Department of Defense, and local, state and federal health authorities. We continue to enforce adherence to social distancing protocols, and require that masks are worn in all public areas across the installation. A team of caregivers including chaplains, counselors and commanders are embedded in the Cadet Area to reinforce the physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing of our cadets.

We have employed a scaled response plan to COVID-19, and the Cadet Wing is currently in COVID Response Phase 1 of that plan. Under Phase 1, day passes in the local area are permitted, and must be approved by an AOC outside of the local area. Overnight passes are allowed but must be approved at the group AOC level, primarily to go to a sponsor family residence or to stay with family in the local area. Under Phase 1 protocols, visitors are not allowed to visit the base.

We are conducting random COVID-19 surveillance testing on a daily basis, and our numbers of positive tests remain well below the national average. We are confident that our Rules of Engagement (ROE), including our Restriction of Movement (ROM) and Quarantine and Isolation (Q&I) procedures are working. Q&I numbers remain low and we are hopeful that this trend will continue. Only a few positive cases have resulted from community spread. In a number of these identified cases, cadets successfully followed guidance and self-reported to the clinic based on having symptoms, thus safeguarding our population.

Our testing strategy and policy implementation has been informed by our now nationally-renowned Pandemic Math Team, which has allowed us to contain and mitigate the spread of COVID while allowing cadets to have as much liberty as possible. Additionally, our outstanding team of medical professionals continue to maintain an active presence with our cadets in Q&I. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the cumulative team effort has saved lives, continues to enable our continued mission success, and has truly modeled for our cadets and our entire Department of Defense how the application of USAFA brainpower can have real-world impacts.

As we continue to implement our response plans, a limited number of cadets remain in lodging at off-campus hotels. Cadets who are residing in hotels must continue to adhere to USAFA standards, including dress and appearance, accountability, and disciplinary policies. We are closely evaluating conditions on and off base, and intend to transition many cadets back to on-campus residency as our Q&I numbers and a number of other factors allow. In the meantime, we have been grateful to have the partnership of these local businesses to help facilitate the safe continuation of our mission.

Finally, thank you for your support during the last three years that I have had the privilege to serve as Superintendent. As a USAFA graduate, I was honored to return to my alma mater to lead the institution

that enabled me to enjoy an incredibly rewarding career of service. I want the same for your cadets, and while these past six-plus months have been one of the most challenging periods in our Academy's history, I have been beyond encouraged by what I have seen in their abilities, maturity and perseverance. They are well on their way to becoming the leaders who will guide our Air and Space Forces into the future. We cannot accomplish our mission without a supportive community, and during my time here I have also been surprised and impressed by the level of engagement and reinforcement from our community of parents. Thank you for all you have done to support your cadets, and ensure our mission success.

Sincerely,

Jay Silveria  
Superintendent, United States Air Force Academy