



February 7, 2022

Video Transcription: CSUDH President Thomas. A Parham Welcomes Toros to Campus

Greetings, Toros and welcome to the spring semester at your California State University, Dominguez Hills. Those I've not had the pleasure of meeting, I'm Dr. Thomas Parham, your president. And I am eager, as all of you are, to get the semester off on the right foot.

You know, our efforts to do so were delayed somewhat by the surge in the COVID-19 cases during the end of 2021 and the start of this year, and the rapid community spread of the Omicron variant forced us, out of an abundance of caution, to extend virtual learning into the first few weeks of this new semester. Now, this postponement of face-to-face instruction has been a bitter blow for some.

But all of us at CSUDH, as we exhibit the prospect of repopulating this campus, are refocusing our energies on student success rather than this pernicious pandemic. Now, these past two years have tested all of us in many ways, but the Toro community has consistently stepped up to the challenges that we have been presented. After all, in all that we've been through, postponing in-person classes for a few more weeks is frustrating for sure but ultimately, a minor hurdle that I think we can get past.

Now, that said, I know that our community is still under tremendous amounts of stress, anxiety and frustration due to the lingering presence of the pandemic. But I assure you, that we here at CSUDH are doing everything possible to ensure that the campus will be a safe and welcoming environment when we finally welcome everybody back.

Now, in addition, please know that every decision I and we make is made with an eye on the incidence and prevalence rates of the COVID infection within the county, hospitalization rates, and mortality rates. We also have an extensive consultation with local public health officials in LA County, statewide infectious diseases specialists, and executives in the CSU Chancellor's Office. Indeed, our decisions are not made in a vacuum, but rather are made in concert with those individuals and with those variables in mind. Now, our plan to repopulate the campus, as a consequence, is informed by these infection rates in the country, our capacity to adhere to public health protocols, our efforts to keep students, faculty, and staff as safe as possible, and what is in the best interest of facilitating student success.

Clearly, some sentiments to cabinet and I have expressed desire for more remote learning and online instruction. And I've heard from many of you directly and read concerns from others in online spaces. But there are assumptions in those narratives that somehow coming to campus would be unsafe, that home and community spaces are better at preventing the spread of COVID viruses, and that students can be equally successful in online versus face-to-face engagement. And while I respect and appreciate people's rights to advocate for those positions, the medical science and academic data do not necessarily support those assumptions.

At Dominguez Hills, we're involved in a robust testing effort at the beginning of the semester, and while not surprising, the large number of infection rates that we saw were not attributed to exposure from the campus environment, given that we were closed for the holiday break. Rather, the spike in rates occurred while people were, in fact, at home, engaged in traversing their community facilities and spaces, personal gatherings, and

travel. Now, prior to the winter break, our infection rates were extremely low. In fact, the lowest across the CSU system. So consequently, the campus is a safe place to carry out our mission to provide you with a transformative education, and I'm confident that the health and safety measures we have taken will enable us to provide a safe learning environment for all of you.

Now, because our requirements to have the Toro community vaccinated and boosted, and to wear face coverings both indoor and outdoor while on campus, our CSUDH campus will actually be a safer place than many spaces we're all frequenting daily. And I would like to mention that our incredible custodial staff have also been working tirelessly to clean and disinfect common spaces and that work is redoubling once the campus will be repopulated.

Now, in making our plans for campus going forward, it is important to note that we have moved away from using the number of positive COVID cases as the leading determinant. We are following the science, which suggests that with the progression of the virus towards endemic and not pandemic, we should be using hospitalizations as the lead determinant going forward. And so the number of positive cases of the Omicron variant having, in fact, spiked in January, but that is now declining throughout Southern California for a variant that is milder and less deadlier than previous iterations were.

And so, while vigilance is still required, I'm confident, confident that California State University, Dominguez Hills' campus will indeed be as safe as possible when our campus course resumes. Regardless of the pandemic or other challenges that demand our attention, the mission and core values of CSUDH will remain the same. We are here to provide transformative, affordable education, scholarship, and service to the people of the South Bay and Southern California. And I'm proud, proud to say that even through a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, our Toro community has kept its eyes on the prize and continued striving towards this goal. Throughout this pandemic, I've referenced the two North Stars that have guided my administration's decisions. The health and safety of our entire community and the academic success of our students. I'm confident, my friends, that we have done everything in our power to create a healthy and safe on-campus environment this semester.

It is now impingent on each of us to ensure that the student success aspect rises to the fore. And by focusing on our university's core values, we will continue to provide our students with the transformative learning experiences that they deserve. And these values of accountability, of collaboration, of continuous learning, of rigorous standards, of proactive partnership, of respect and responsiveness represent the pathway to student success, and I expect reach of us at California State University, Dominguez Hills to keep them in mind as we move forward through this semester.

So while our return to campus has been delayed, it will not be denied. Let's turn the frustration at the latest delay into determination to make this semester a success. And soon we'll all be together, experiencing the excitement and energy that traditionally accompanies the start of a new year. Like all of you, I am impatient for that to happen, but I'm beyond excited that the end of the days of the virtual spaces and Zoom meetings is in sight.

So welcome to the spring 2022 semester at California State University, Dominguez Hills. I'll see you soon, and as always, Go Toros!