

Microbac's Wastewater Testing Helps Hampden-Sydney College Monitor for COVID-19, Safely Return to Campus

RICHMOND, VA, UNITED STATES, May 18, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Microbac Laboratories](#) has enabled [Hampden-Sydney College](#) to safely return to in-person classes through targeted wastewater testing that monitors the potential spread of COVID-19. Thus far, Hampden-Sydney's robust testing approach has yielded zero classroom-transmitted COVID-19 cases, enabling the entire student body to remain and learn on campus during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Microbac tests the campus's wastewater samples on approximately 10-day intervals, allowing Hampden-Sydney to pinpoint potential COVID-19 hot spots in specific residential buildings and order standard PCR testing for students living in high-risk dormitories. Every week, 10% of students are randomly selected for a test based on wastewater results.

Through wastewater testing, Hampden-Sydney was able to catch a significant uptick in the presence of COVID-19 after students returned from a mid-semester break. Based on this intelligence, the school increased PCR testing and quarantines within the affected dormitory, halting the spread of the virus.

"When the pandemic hit, we all went virtual, and as a result, our students, across all disciplines, struggled academically," said Gordon Neal, Director of Communications & Marketing for Hampden-Sydney College. "Our goal was to find a way to safely bring students back to campus for face-to-face instruction. Microbac's wastewater testing has been critical in making this happen."

Aiming to bring students back to campus for the Fall 2020 semester, Hampden-Sydney first approached Microbac Laboratories for surface testing in classrooms, locker rooms, and other facilities, but shifted its focus to wastewater testing for a more proactive strategy.

"Wastewater testing keeps Hampden-Sydney a step ahead of the virus by detecting potential infection up to a week before symptoms appear," said Dr. Aaron Peacock, Director of Molecular Biology at Microbac Laboratories. "With that early warning signal and the ability to track trends over time for all its students in residence, we've helped Hampden-Sydney safely return to — and remain in — in-person classes and focus on students' academic success."

Aside from COVID-19 testing, Hampden-Sydney students are required to practice social

distancing and wear masks in all academic buildings. The school developed its own contact tracing program and dedicated specific dormitories for isolation and quarantine when needed. The entire campus community has embraced [Microbac's wastewater testing efforts](#), which will continue through the college's 2021 summer session and the 2021-2022 academic year.

"If we don't put out the wastewater results, people get upset," Neal said. "This tells us people want to see what is happening on campus and that the monitoring offers a sense of comfort, safety, and confidence that our COVID-19 mitigation strategy is working."

SARS-CoV-2 can be detected in wastewater up to a week before symptoms are visible, making wastewater surveillance an effective tool in the fight against COVID-19. With wastewater testing, community leaders can identify new outbreaks, understand the prevalence of infection, and even monitor the success of vaccination campaigns.

About Microbac Laboratories, Inc.

Microbac Laboratories, Inc. operates the largest network of privately held testing facilities in the United States, providing broad analytical offerings and testing insights across the environmental, food, and life science markets. A family-run company with more than 50 years of experience honing its craft, Microbac is on a mission to improve the world around us, one test at a time.

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