

TN Dept. of Health awards Southwest \$500K grant to fund COVID-19 testing sites and prevention services

Southwest will hire staff and redesign spaces on campus and outfit them with equipment designed to help the community engage in disease prevention.

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The Tennessee Department of Health

(TDH) awarded Southwest Tennessee Community College a \$500,000 Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) State Colleges and Universities grant last month to fund the college's COVID-19 testing and community outreach efforts. Southwest will hire staff and redesign spaces on campus and outfit them with equipment designed to help the community engage in disease prevention.



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"These funds are critical to our ongoing efforts to help protect the Mid-South from COVID-19," Southwest Tennessee Community College President Tracy D. Hall said. "During the pandemic, we helped test nearly 40,000 residents at our Whitehaven and Gill centers. Our commitment to fighting COVID-19 continues with this effort to help fellow residents avoid infection through education and testing."

Southwest will use the funds to hire three full-time health educators and two part-time support staff members who will operate free testing sites at the Macon Cove and Union Avenue campuses and the Whitehaven Center. All three locations will offer drive-thru and drop-in testing for Southwest students, faculty and staff and the greater Memphis community.

Health and Natural Sciences Dean Shelia Bouie says health seminars will begin as soon as this summer. "Our goal is to promote a healthier Memphis by providing access to accurate information about COVID-19 and other infectious diseases," Dr. Bouie said. "A healthy community makes for a healthier college."

President Hall says the funds will help the college address health disparities. "All of us have been touched by COVID-19 in some way, and communities of color were hit particularly hard," President Hall said. We are grateful for these funds and intend to use them to address the health

disparities surrounding infectious disease in our community,” Hall added. “The ultimate goal is to support our students and employees and greater community to stay healthy and strong.”

For more information about Southwest’s public health efforts, contact Dr. Shelia Bouie at sbouie@southwest.tn.edu.

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