

Ouachita Baptist University

Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

Press Releases

Office of Communication

3-1-2021

Pandemic Profiles: Kristi Seals and Kristin Kesterson Ouachita's COVID-19 Testing Center

Rachel Gaddis

Ouachita Baptist University

Ouachita News Bureau

Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/press_releases



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [Organizational Communication Commons](#), and the [Public Relations and Advertising Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gaddis, Rachel and Ouachita News Bureau, "Pandemic Profiles: Kristi Seals and Kristin Kesterson Ouachita's COVID-19 Testing Center" (2021). *Press Releases*. 1237.

https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/press_releases/1237

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Communication at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Press Releases by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

Pandemic Profiles: Kristi Seals and Kristin Kesterson Ouachita's COVID-19 Testing Center



By Rachel Gaddis

March 01, 2021

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. –For many Ouachita students, the slightest sign of COVID-19 symptoms or the realization that they have been exposed to a positive case causes anxiety, naturally. But since students returned to campus for residential learning in August 2020, they have had two on-campus “mommas” to call for guidance: Kristi Seals and Kristin Kesterson.

Kesterson and Seals have been operating Ouachita's COVID-19 Testing Center in Evans Student Center. Kesterson is an experienced registered nurse (RN) who has worked for Dr. Wesley Kluck at both his Arkadelphia and Ouachita campus clinics for the past nine years, and Seals has a background in health information technology and medical billing with a particular interest in public health and contact tracing.

“When it became clear Ouachita would be able to have on-campus COVID-19 testing for the 2020-21 academic year, the first task was finding the right staff. Not everyone would be excited about working in a COVID testing center,” said Dr. Kluck, vice president for student development and university physician.

“God was already working in two women, and when I started looking, both positions were filled in a matter of three to four days.”

By the end of the Fall 2020 semester, Kesterson and Seals had logged 500 rapid antigen tests, 1,000 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, and their student contact tracers had logged 10,500 calls. Seals likes to say they run “a COVID testing center and COVID counseling office.”

“We get to be with these students in their freak-out moment,” Seals said. “This virus they’re hearing about on the news – they have it. For the people who test positive and are freaking out, or the close contacts freaking out, we talk to them about a plan and say, ‘Here’s what we’re going to do.’”

And on a college campus teeming with students, “the plan” involves a *lot* of legwork and paperwork. Once students, faculty or staff are pre-screened for testing by Nurse Molly Wallace, Ouachita’s director of health services, the duo handles everything from testing and contact tracing to progress notes and release forms.

When someone tests positive, Seals goes over CDC guidelines with them, begins counting the number of days they need to remain in quarantine or isolation and assigns a contact tracer to check in with them every day; the contact tracer, usually a resident assistant (RA) or Ouachita nursing student, then reports back daily with temperature readings and symptoms. Kesterson makes progress notes and handles any billing or insurance, and Seals notifies faculty about students who need to be excused from in-person classes and work study.

How in the world do they stay organized on the status of their patients?

“Thanks to Dr. Kluck, who took 25 hours’ worth of Excel classes over the last few summers, we have pretty impressive spreadsheets,” Seals said. “IT Services also developed a program to let professors know about students in quarantine, so now we can go into the system and it sends an email.”

They also coordinate with Ouachita’s dining services provider, Sodexo, to have meals delivered to students who are in isolation on campus, as well as notify the Office of Student Financial Aid in case reimbursement is necessary for students who have to leave campus to quarantine for an extended period of time.

“People don’t realize that some of these students can’t go home; they’re 14 hours away,” Kesterson said. “We try to get them settled in isolation and inform Sodexo which students need meals.”

Lately, with NCAA Division II athletics competing again after a 10-month pause, Kesterson and Seals have been aiding Ouachita athletic trainers in testing Ouachita student athletes weekly, and some of them bi-weekly, to be cleared before games per NCAA requirements. While they often use FedEx to ship athletes’ PCR tests to a Little Rock lab, most teams need results much faster.

“This semester we’ve driven the tests up to Little Rock occasionally,” Seals said. “Usually an athletic trainer or Coach David Sharp take them, but we’ve taken them a few different times, and so has my husband.”

Reflecting on the challenges of being the university’s front line of defense against the pandemic, both Kesterson and Seals mentioned restlessly checking students’ test results on their phones in the middle of the night, adjusting things at home with their families so they could juggle the workload and simply trying

to take things day-by-day to avoid burnout.

“If we knew we’d do this for the next 10 years, we couldn’t do it. But it’s temporary,” Kesterson said. “Overall, it’s been positive. Even when I make someone cry testing them, they say, ‘Thank you.’ Even though they hate coming in and getting tested, they tell us they appreciate us being here.”

“This has been a team effort; Ouachita’s Health Monitoring and Action Team set up a great plan that we walked into and put into action,” Seals said. “Nurse Molly and Ouachita athletic trainers have also been a huge part of making this successful.

“We want students to be on campus, we want them to play sports, and we want to do whatever we can to help see that happen,” she added.

“Kristin and Kristi work tirelessly and selflessly – even coming up to campus on off-days to do testing if needed,” Kluck said. “We have the best COVID testing center on any college campus, in my opinion, because of these two ladies.”

Lead photo: Kristi Seals (left) and Kristin Kesterson (right) have been working in Ouachita's COVID Testing Center since August 2020. Seals has a background in health information technology and medical billing and Kesterson is an experienced registered nurse (RN). Photo by Tyler Rosenthal.