

# **Greenville University Announces Research Partnership With University Of Illinois To Stop Spread Of SARS-CoV-2**

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GREENVILLE - This week, Greenville University announced a research partnership with the University of Illinois to evaluate a program designed to mitigate the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that cause COVID-19. The U of I's SHIELD program has three components.

The first, Target, is anchored on epidemiologic modeling that will inform our community of how often and when individuals on campus should be tested for SARS-CoV-2. The second, Test, involves a novel means of testing for COVID-19 using saliva samples rather than nose swabs.

The saliva tests are painless, take about a minute to complete and return results within hours. The final component, Tell, is a communications piece designed to inform individuals of what to do, especially if a test result is positive for the novel coronavirus.

By participating in the SHIELD program, Greenville University will serve as a test case of how a small university in a rural community can contain the spread of the virus.

Jay Walsh, Vice President for Economic Development and Innovation at the University of GU, spoke to the newly formed research partnership with Greenville University.

“Greenville University is a small university in an area of the country that is less populated than our three U of I locations. Those U of I campuses are excellent sites to evaluate Shield in mid-sized and larger communities. Greenville University is an excellent environment to evaluate the aspects of SHIELD in a smaller community. It is important that we understand how one can control this virus in a smaller environment.

"Greenville University is an excellent site to test that model; further, in the development of the research collaboration, Greenville has been a wonderful partner with whom we are truly thrilled to be working.”

Greenville President Suzanne Davis adds, “At GU, we are taking advantage of the fact that we are a small, semi-contained university within a low-density part of the country and that is a significant advantage in this time in history. Our rural environment, combined with our ability to offer the most current scientific knowledge based on an epidemiologic model for testing for the COVID virus, allows us to responsibly open the campus for the fall semester.”

The partnership came about through collaboration between President Davis and U of I System President Timothy Killeen. The two presidents began communicating about COVID-19 response earlier this summer. Davis is a double U of I grad with an MBA and a jurisdoctorate.

“President Killeen and I talked several times over the summer about the nature of the virus and how testing would be needed in order to responsibly open for students in the fall,” Davis said. President Killeen suggested to President Davis that she participate in the exploration of a revolutionary COVID-19 testing approach which could be accurate, non-invasive and deliver relatively rapid test results.

SHIELD is based upon a saliva test that can be done quickly and easily. Epidemiologic models tell us that the test has the sensitivity and specificity that is necessary, and can be done frequently enough that we can mitigate the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 on the Greenville campus.

Davis stressed that a robust testing system on campus will provide a safer environment for students and allow more features of GU life to return to normal.

“Community is the hallmark of the GU experience,” Davis said. “Our students want to come back and be together, and we want to explore every avenue available to give them that experience safely.”

Greenville University is an accredited Christian liberal arts university with more than 1,100 students, including traditional undergraduate, graduate, and adult degree completion students. Founded in 1892 and affiliated with the Free Methodist Church, the University is located in Greenville, Illinois, 45 miles east of St. Louis, Missouri. [www.greenville.edu](http://www.greenville.edu).