

An interview with Dr Sam:

On October 14, 2020 I interviewed an associate director of a college program. The interview was conducted via Zoom and was recorded for transcription. Since the day of the interview my subject has changed her permission for use of the video and now is only okay with a written transcript. One which remains anonymous.

As mentioned, Dr Sam is an associate director of program assisting students on the campus of a private university in southern Texas, She runs the day-to-day operations of the program as well as performing most of the liaison work with the authorities supervising the program. The program director is an associate professor of an academic subject and teaches a full load.

Both Dr Sam and her administrative assistant are immunocompromised, and the office requires precautions equal to or greater than those generally associated with the Covid virus. This is one of the reasons I wanted to interview her, to understand the precautions required in this era of health uncertainty.

Dr Sam is known personally to me yet wishes to remain anonymous. Perhaps not wanting to draw undue attention to her students or invade their privacy or the privacy of her administrative assistant.

What follows is the transcript of our discussion on the changes to her office and change required to serve the students this semester.

Chris: Hello. How are you today?

Sam: I'm well. I hope you can see me clearly through the plexiglass barrier. Just one of the precautions in most of the offices here which serve the student population.

Chris: You mean Plexiglas as in the clear shield originally used to protect bank tellers?

Sam: Yes. It's now needed to prevent the virus from traveling from an unmasked visitor to a member of staff here on campus. Though all students, faculty and staff should be wearing masks at all times when not in the privacy of their dorms, when alone in their offices or when eating at a socially responsible distance in the cafeteria.

Chris: I see. I also noticed the signage outside the door and in the hallway reminding students and staff to maintain social distancing. As well as the fact that the water fountains have been shut off and occupancy of the restrooms is restricted to two persons. Are there other precautions you and your administrative assistant have here beyond those?

Sam: As you see occupancy of the outer office is also restricted to two persons and no more than one person should be in here with me at any time. In order to hold a staff meeting we have to meet at the director's office in another building (the director has her office in a building closer to the building where administration is. This office is in a building which is mostly classrooms and the office of the Dean of the Division).

Chris: I see that.

Are there additional restrictions needed since you and your assist are both immunocompromised?

Sam: For now we can manage with just strict adherence to university policy on offices as well as performing most services via Zoom (which currently include seminars for the students). Anyone needing to contact the director needs to make an appointment to see her in her office. This changed since the pandemic.

It's not a restriction per se, but our office must be cleaned by the janitorial staff every day. Some offices are only cleaned three times a week. Administration knows of our health issues and knows the other choice would logically be all services rendered via Zoom, except for those which could be performed by the director herself.

Sam: We are trying to keep the situation as normal as possible. The program is an important one because the students in the program are an underrepresented group in America (Dr Sam works with first generation minority students helping them into potential grad school careers).

Chris: Anything else you would like to add?

Sam: Thank you for taking an interest in our program and the need to spread good health concepts to everyone during the pandemic. We will survive this, I hope.

Disclosure: I know Dr Sam personally and have visited with her and her administrative assistant before the pandemic. This is an important program and I had worried about the possibility of this having to go totally through Zoom. Both Dr Sam and her administrative assistant (who both hold graduate degrees) are members of the high risk group for Covid-19.