



The Return of the Flock

EMAIL TO THE WASHINGTON COLLEGE COMMUNITY – 1/14/22

To the Washington College Community,

Please review the below information, as there are some important updates to our COVID operations for the spring semester. We remain committed to the safety and well-being of our community, even as our safety practices and operations evolve in response to this ever-changing pandemic.

Booster Documentation -- ACTION REQUIRED!!!

If you haven't already done so and have received your booster, please upload your updated vaccine card showing the 3rd dose. It should be added to the [Student Health Portal](#). When uploading, you will select the option named "Proof of COVID Vaccine" for the booster documentation.

To date, we have only received this documentation from only 30% of the students. This is a key data point that we are using in evaluating how to safely start the semester, so we need your help in uploading that so that we know we have an accurate understanding of our overall vaccination rate.

We are aware that everyone's eligibility for the booster is dependent upon the timing of the original vaccine. It was recently announced that anyone who received the Pfizer vaccine is eligible for a Pfizer booster after 5 months, shortening the window by 30 days. If you are not yet eligible for the booster, please schedule your appointment and then upload the documentation as soon as you receive the booster.

Any students who received approved exemptions for the 2021-22 academic year will still be required to participate in regular surveillance testing once the semester begins.

Have questions? Check out the [FAQ section](#) about the vaccine requirement.

Gateway Testing Upon Arrival

All students are required to make an appointment for gateway testing upon their return, and the move-in window has been expanded to 1/18 to 1/23. The testing appointment sign-ups are available now for students in the housing portal. If you were considered an Early Arrival already, then you should instead follow the original process for scheduling an appointment for testing. Full details were emailed earlier this week to all students – you can review those again [here](#).

We encourage anyone who is aware of a recent exposure or who feels at all unwell to test prior to return and potentially delay your arrival. Testing ahead of time, however, will not replace the gateway test.

Isolation housing on campus will be reserved for those who are unable to travel home after testing positive. Those who are within driving distance will be expected to return home for the isolation period.



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Isolation Requirements

In accordance with updated CDC guidance around isolation, we have made some changes to the requirements. Please visit the revised [Quarantine and Isolation section](#) for full details, but the summary is that we will now allow for a shortened isolation period (5 days) for fully vaccinated and boosted individuals who were asymptomatic, or whose symptoms were mild and have resolved, if they also return a negative test result on day 6.

This is NOT a one-size-fits-all decision, so please understand that the Health Services team must consider every COVID-positive case on an individual basis. The person's health, their vaccination status, any extenuating circumstances, the severity of symptoms, and any other risk factors will be considered in deciding on the appropriate isolation period. But we will no longer follow the standard of 10 days minimum for those who are fully vaccinated.

As a reminder, quarantine after a close contact exposure is no longer required for those who are fully vaccinated.

Academic Instruction

We remain committed to providing the best possible learning experience and as such, we are planning for in-person instruction, beginning on January 24. The indoor mask policy remains in place, which provides an extra measure of safety in an already well-controlled environment.

We will, however, be monitoring case counts as gateway testing progresses, and in the event the number of positive tests reaches 25% - meaning 1 in 4 students would be required to isolate – we are fully prepared to shift all instruction to online. This change to virtual would be temporary and would be evaluated one week at a time, and the campus will remain open. Once the number of students who are impacted decreases, we will move back to in-person learning for all classes.

As noted above, the allowance for a shortened isolation requirement will get many students back to the classroom sooner. Faculty will also continue to work with students who test positive, to ensure that they are not falling behind in their classwork.

Indoor Mask Requirement

The masking requirement remains in effect for all indoor public spaces. This will be strictly enforced.

Additionally, there is new guidance that suggests that the KN-95 masks are the best option to reduce the spread of Omicron. If you are able to secure a KN-95 mask, we encourage you to do so. The College is also working to secure a supply of them, but the quantity and distribution options are still TBD. If you do not have a KN-95 or N95 mask, the next best option is to use a paper surgical mask with a cloth mask on top of it.



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COVID Section of Website

The spring guidance is included in the [COVID section of the website](#). We will continue to update this information as needed, and as operations shift in response to updated guidance.

Employees/Workers

All Washington College employees without a vaccine card on file are also required to participate in surveillance testing again this semester.

Much of the above applies directly to students, and as such, additional guidance specific to workers will be circulated in the next week. But all employees should be aware of these protocols.