



The Return of the Flock

EMAIL TO THE WASHINGTON COLLEGE COMMUNITY

Updated Vaccination Policy – Booster Requirement – December 17, 2021

To the Washington College Community,

Given the recent surge in new COVID variants and the indications that boosters are playing a key role in mitigation and safety, we are writing to share that **the decision has been made to require the COVID booster as part of the vaccine requirement that is in effect for all students**. In order to provide both certainty and time to plan, we wanted to announce this now as we head into the holidays and our much-needed winter break.

Vaccine rates among the student body were around 98% this semester, and we again thank the community for your compliance with this requirement. The high vaccination rate was no doubt responsible for us having very few positive cases on campus throughout the majority of the semester.

But given what we now know, and the trends that we have seen on our own campus in the last two weeks, it is only prudent that we update the vaccination requirement to include the booster. The primary contributing factors in making this decision are:

- The CDC's updated guidance that anyone over 18 should get the booster once they are 6 months past their vaccination date. Additionally, we can reasonably expect the CDC to update their definition of "fully vaccinated" to include a third shot.
- The knowledge that the effectiveness of the original vaccine wanes over time. Given that many in our community were vaccinated last spring, it is likely that the majority are past the 6-month window.
- The spread of new variants like Delta and Omicron, which are highly transmissible, even amongst individuals who are vaccinated.
- After going nearly the entire semester with no cases, began to see COVID cases in our community in just the last two weeks. While the numbers remain low, it is an indication that we are not in fact immune to a COVID outbreak, despite our high vaccination rate and ongoing safety measures.

This update will go into effect December 20, 2021 and all students must comply before returning to campus in January. This should provide ample time to make arrangements for the Booster shot before you return to campus in January.

Once you have received the booster shot (or if you already have) please be sure to upload your updated vaccine card to the [Student Health Portal](#).

One reminder, if you requested and received a vaccine exemption for the 2021-22 academic year, that exemption covers the booster as well. Those exemptions are good for one full year, so you do not need to re-submit an exemption request for the booster if you were already approved.

We will be providing more detailed information about this, our gateway testing plan and all other spring semester COVID operations in the coming weeks.



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The ever-present twists and turns presented by new COVID variants and the updated protocols that result from new learnings about the virus have made our efforts to safeguard the Washington College community a moving target. We can reasonably expect that our need to adapt and stay agile will continue, in an effort to hold true to the one constant since the pandemic began – our commitment to protecting the health and wellbeing of our community.

Congratulations to all on a successful semester, and best wishes for a happy, healthy and safe holiday season.