



**better
together**

May 12, 2021

To the Washington College Community,

After careful and thorough evaluation, Washington College will be adding the COVID vaccine to the list of required vaccinations for all enrolled students. This requirement will be in effect for the upcoming fall semester and until further notice. **We will of course comply with all federal and state laws around exemptions for medical or religious reasons.**

We did not come to this decision lightly. But when evaluated against our priority of returning our community to a sense of normalcy, the vaccine requirement is the best choice. Given the increased transmission risks associated with our congregate setting, and our commitment to delivering the in-person experiences that define the Washington College experience, this is the right solution for us and most importantly, for our student population. While it's easy to forget that we are still in the midst of a public health emergency, we can't ignore the data that shows increased risks for younger people, particularly from new variants that are both more contagious and more dangerous.

Vaccines matter the most in the fight against this virus. Vaccines are the singular thing that will truly protect the health and safety of our community and help us to rebound to normal. Without vaccination, we know that we can only effectively keep the virus at bay through compliance with stringent COVID protocols. But as long as there are enough people within our community who remain susceptible, the coronavirus will continue to find ways to circulate.

It's important to note that students who were on campus this spring took the COVID protocols to heart, resulting in just 19 positive cases, 14 of which were associated with a single outbreak in February. We applaud their maturity and compliance with the guidelines. But with the population on campus expected to nearly double in the fall semester, we have to face the reality that what worked for the last five months may not hold up in the face of new variants and more people in constant contact with one another.

And more than anything, we want our students to be able to learn together, study together, live together, eat together, play sports together, sing and play music together and just be together. Adding the COVID vaccine to the list of required vaccinations is therefore a reasonable decision, as we seek to keep everyone not just healthy and safe, but also fully engaged in a productive and valuable in-person college experience.

With our student population vaccinated, we can loosen – and in some cases, remove – the COVID restrictions that re-defined campus life this year. Among those changes that we expect to be able to announce this summer are revised quarantine requirements for anyone who has been vaccinated, the outdoor mask policy, and COVID testing frequency. We want to be clear that there will still be some COVID protocols in place, as we follow the science and listen to guidance from the experts. This





continues to evolve and we expect that by late July, we will know more than we do today and that knowledge will certainly inform our decisions.

Are there still questions about this? Absolutely. And over the coming weeks we will do our best to continue to answer them. For now, we have started a list of [Frequently Asked Questions and encourage you to visit this page for more information](#). At this juncture, the critical aspect was to make the announcement about the vaccine requirement, so that all students have adequate time to get vaccinated.

We also know that there remain some very real concerns and fears about the vaccine itself, and we understand. We encourage anyone with questions or concerns to discuss those with your primary medical provider. Certainly, specific questions related to our College vaccine requirement may be directed to Health Services at Health_Services@washcoll.edu.

We are in awe of how this community has adapted and adjusted over the last three semesters, embracing our virtual reality and finding new and innovative ways to establish connections. But it's time to get back to the in-person experiences that are the hallmark of this close-knit campus, and requiring the COVID vaccine is the best way for us to safely accomplish that.

