

From: [McWilliams, Matthew](#)
To: [All Faculty, Staff & Contract Employees](#)
Subject: Covid-19 update
Date: Wednesday, October 20, 2021 11:15:16 AM

Longwood community,

I haven't sent out a Covid-19 update email in a few weeks, so I wanted to check in just past the mid-semester point to share some numbers and perspective on what we've experienced so far this semester, and what we might expect going forward.

Generally, there is good news to share. In most respects, the semester has played out as we hoped and expected. We are seeing some cases but not patterns of significant spread on campus. Upticks in cases have generally followed weekends where students go home and return to campus. Because those who are vaccinated generally don't need to quarantine if contact exposed (though they must get tested, and any who test positive must of course isolate), our quarantine support resources for students have not been overstretched.

Here are some details:

Covid Numbers

Since Aug. 15, when we relaunched the [dashboard](#), we have had 83 student and 17 faculty/staff active cases reported, either at the University Health Center or self-reported. Most of these have been among vaccinated individuals, and thankfully most experience mild or no symptoms and recover quickly. It is very clear the symptoms of vaccinated individuals are far less severe than those who are unvaccinated.

In communities like ours, where the vast majority of community members are vaccinated, and where there is substantial testing, the patterns we're seeing are entirely expected. Other Virginia college campuses are generally seeing similar patterns, too.

The University Health Center is busy and testing a lot, especially because certain symptoms of Covid mirror symptoms of common seasonal illnesses like allergies and colds. They are doing remarkable work and continuing to accommodate almost all students who request one a same-day appointment. Including students, faculty and staff, it is not uncommon that 50-60 tests are administered per day. So far this semester, the UHC has given almost 1,300 antigen and PCR tests. There have been 44 positive results, for an overall positivity rate of 3.4%. In recent weeks, broadly speaking, we are seeing on average about one new positive case per day in our campus community.

In short, we shouldn't be surprised to see fluctuations, but overall the place we've been in so

far this semester has been stable, and we hope it will remain so. We should probably assume Covid-19 will be a fact of life for some time, and will likely become endemic globally. Still, thanks to vaccinations and some continued simple precautions, we have shown that campus life can thrive safely. I applaud everyone for continuing to follow guidelines, and keeping yourself and those around you healthy. Please keep it up as the winter approaches, and I will stay in touch with any updates as needed.

Vaccine Boosters

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is expected this week to approve booster shots for those who have already been vaccinated with Moderna and Johnson and Johnson. Such approval has already been given for Pfizer. According to the Virginia Department of Health, higher education faculty and staff are on the list of jobs that are approved for booster shots once they are FDA approved, so community providers including local drugstores can provide them to faculty/staff who wish to receive one. Unlike last winter, there is now widespread availability of resources to provide doses in the community.

If you have not gotten your vaccine yet and wish to do so, the UHC is taking appointments. Please call them at 434-395-2102 to schedule an appointment.

Earthquake Drill Reminder

Just a reminder that tomorrow, Thursday, Oct. 21, Longwood will participate in the nationwide Great Earthquake Shakeout drill. At approximately 9:45 a.m., aspects of the alert system will be activated for the drill. You do not have to take any action. In an actual earthquake residents in affected areas should drop to the ground, take cover, and hold on. The drill will last approximately five minutes.

Thanks,

Matthew McWilliams
Assistant Vice President for Communications
Longwood University