

COVID-19 Update: Adjusting Mask Protocols and Preparation for the Fall Semester

Rojas, Jason <Jason.Rojas@trincoll.edu>

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To: Rojas, Jason <Jason.Rojas@trincoll.edu>

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

As we prepare for the opening of the 2021–22 academic year, we write today with some updates about arrival plans for students, campus operations, and protocols regarding our continued management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We anticipate a return to campus life that more closely resembles the Trinity experience we have all come to cherish and appreciate. While we continue to be encouraged by the rate of COVID-19 vaccination in the state and among members of the Trinity community, we must remain vigilant as variants in the virus pose new questions for us to consider and respond to.

As we have throughout the COVID pandemic, we are taking several actions to create the best possible living, learning, and working environment. In our decision-making on policies and procedures, we are guided by the following values and principles:

- Priority for the health, safety, and well-being of faculty, staff, students, and campus partners
- Using guidance and recommendations by the CDC, State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, as well as public health and infection disease experts in our Hartford HealthCare partnership network
- Ensuring the continued fulfillment of our academic mission and prioritizing the experiences that support it

To that end, we are sharing these updates and reminders with you as we prepare for the fall semester.

Masks and Physical-Distancing Protocols

The latest information from CDC strongly recommends masks be worn indoors in regions where the COVID-19 virus is being substantially transmitted. As of July 28, Hartford County is classified as one of those locations. Given this guidance, beginning tomorrow we are requiring masks to be worn for all indoor activities and in common areas (classrooms, event spaces, and hallways) except when alone, such as in a private office or in college sponsored housing. Our previous policy allowed for informal agreements between vaccinated members of our community to remove masks while inside campus buildings. These agreements are now prohibited.

Given the increased transmission of variants of COVID-19, mask wearing will now be required for all attendees at outdoor college- and student-sponsored events and gatherings. We have made this change out of an abundance of caution and it will remain in effect for the foreseeable future. While outside and going about daily outdoor activities, members of our community are not required to wear masks at this time.

In order to avoid densely packed spaces, we are implementing a 50 percent capacity limit on all non-classroom indoor events. Classrooms, which are supervised environments where everyone is presumed to be vaccinated, will remain at full capacity. We are working with Chartwells to determine our approach for maintaining health and safety in our dining facilities and will provide an update in a future communication as we continue to monitor CDC and state Department of Public Health guidance.

Working, Living, and Studying on Campus—Required COVID Vaccination

As all of you know, employees and students are required to be vaccinated in order to be on campus. Please upload your vaccination card to the [student health portal](#). It is essential that you submit proof of vaccination prior to your return to campus. Students must complete this step by August 23, and all employees should have submitted their proof of vaccination by now. A small number of our faculty, staff, and students have been given exemptions. These individuals will be required to be tested weekly and to wear masks in all public settings.

Vaccination is the strongest tool we have to mitigate the spread of COVID variants and reduce the severity of symptoms for most who contract the virus. Your efforts in this area will allow our community to return to an in-person experience that has far fewer restrictions than we had this past year.

COVID-19 Testing at Trinity

As vaccination rates increase within our community, we have transitioned our testing site to the Health Center here on campus. Beginning today, vaccinated students and employees will not need to be tested. The Health Center will be testing unvaccinated students and employees who have exemptions, and we will announce the testing center schedule shortly. Any student who feels ill can call the Health Center to be tested. Employees who do not feel well should remain home and seek assistance from their health care provider. The Health Center will not be testing vaccinated employees.

We have planned for a reduced testing protocol where we will conduct surveillance testing of 10–15 percent of the student population on a weekly basis. This will help us monitor the possible presence of COVID-19 within our student community, given the close proximity of living with each other and because of the onset of a variant that we continue to learn about. The complete plan for surveillance testing will be announced the week of August 23.

Student Arrival and Move-In

Students will begin to arrive on campus on August 22. Later this week, all students will receive a detailed message from The Bantam Network Residential Learning Community about arrival plans. **Students who have not uploaded their vaccination card or who have not been granted an exemption will not be allowed on campus. Students will not be able to opt out of this requirement as classes (with very few exceptions) will be in-person.**

As part of arrival, all students will be required to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test that was administered within 72 hours of arrival. Only students who are unvaccinated and have an approved exemption will be tested upon arrival to campus. Vaccinated students will not be tested. We are asking that all students and family members wear masks while inside residence halls during move-in. No more than two family members are allowed to assist with move-in and they do not need to present a negative COVID-19 test. We strongly encourage family members to be vaccinated if they plan to be present on campus.

Co-Curricular Activities, Including Athletics/Recreation, Performing Arts, and Student Led Social Events

On June 25, 2021, The New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) announced a return to full conference schedules and championships this fall. Trinity College also plans to offer a full array of club sports, recreational fitness, and intramural activities, as well as a resumption of normal hours in the fitness center. Students participating in employee-supervised athletic and recreational activities (practices and competitions) will not be required to wear masks outdoors during those activities as long as all participants and instructors are vaccinated. Instructors and students engaged in theater, dance, and singing activities will not be required to wear masks if they are outdoors and all are vaccinated. We will continue to add guidance for specific situations [to the FAQs](#) as guidance becomes available.

We remain highly concerned about the transmissibility of the COVID-19 virus and variants. Recent information from the CDC indicates that the COVID-19 Delta variant has been transmitted among vaccinated people in highly dense social settings. Therefore, we are putting in place the following requirements for student-sponsored social events:

- For student-sponsored events that are not supervised by a college employee, masks are required for all indoor activities and participants will be limited to avoid densely packed spaces. Limitations will be based on ensuring three-foot distance between participants and no more than 50 percent normal capacity.
- For outdoor student-sponsored events that are not supervised by a college employee, participation will be limited to no more than 50 participants, and attendees are expected to wear masks.

Visitors to Campus

Visitors and invited guests are welcome on campus, and they must wear masks in both indoor and outdoor settings.

College-Related/Sponsored Travel

The current travel policy will remain in place at this time. Faculty and staff may participate in college sponsored travel in accordance with [CDC travel guidance](#), which differentiates between vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. It also has guidance specific to domestic and international travel. International college sponsored travel by employees is prohibited to all areas categorized by the CDC as Level 4 risks, where the COVID-19 level is “very high.” Such travel to Level 3 areas is permissible in very limited circumstances and must be approved by a division head.

Looking Ahead

The college’s [COVID-19 Steering Committee](#) continues to monitor the transmission rates in the region and the spread of the Delta variant. As always, we are guided by the State of Connecticut’s policies and recommendations, as well as recommendations from public health and infectious disease experts and organizations. Safety, health, and well-being remain our all-important guiding principles as we make decisions about policies and procedures.

Sincerely,

Joe DiChristina, Vice President for Student Success and Enrollment Management
Jason Rojas, Chief of Staff and Associate Vice President for External Affairs