

Protect the Nest: Mask Wearing and an Update to Our Isolation Policy

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

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

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

Thank you to all members of the college community who supported a successful launch to the 2021–22 academic year. Despite the continued presence of COVID-19 in our lives, first-year students experienced amazing orientation programs and joyous Convocation and matriculation ceremony, and we had an ice cream social to launch the first day of classes. As of today, we remain at a green alert level, and our vaccination rate among employees and students has reached 98 percent. Our surveillance testing [has identified 0 cases](#).

Over the past year, we have all sacrificed and adjusted our expectations for many milestone moments: a high school senior year, a first year of college, a first college internship between sophomore and junior year, or how we interact with each other in person. We have shown grit as individuals and as a community. As we look to the year ahead, we must continue to be accountable for our actions in order to ensure we maintain a safe and healthy community. In August, we updated you on our directives for mask wearing, guidelines for gatherings, and plans for testing, isolation, and quarantine. Each of these were developed to help us manage the impact of the delta variant on our understanding of COVID-19.

We write today to with updates on mask wearing and adjustments to our testing, isolation, and quarantine policies.

Mask Wearing

We have received reports that compliance with our mask wearing policy has been inconsistent across various settings on campus. While compliance with mask wearing in classrooms has been strong, there have been reports of lack of compliance in common areas such as the dining hall, the fitness center, and the library. We have started out the year with fewer restrictions than last year, and we can only maintain them if we keep the transmission of COVID-19 low on campus. This is accomplished by everyone adhering to our COVID-19 polices. As part of a [community contract](#), students pledged that they understand why the college implemented these policies and that they were enacted to mitigate the transmission COVID-19 on campus. Additionally, faculty and staff are required to comply with college policy as a condition of employment.

We implore you to **consistently wear your mask while indoors**. This is required by the college and by executive order from the City of Hartford, which mandates indoor mask wearing. Mask wearing is *the least restrictive strategy* for mitigating the spread of COVID-19. If we continue to receive reports of a lack of compliance, we will have to consider additional restrictions on the number of people who can be in spaces, reductions in allowable crowd sizes, and other accountability measures, including disciplinary actions.

Testing, Isolation, and Quarantine

We are adjusting our testing policy based on feedback we from our healthcare advisers. The change relates to our policy for quarantine and isolation of students who have a positive test result. Originally, we decided the following on FULLY VACCINATED students: Those who test positive in surveillance testing will be required to wear masks for 10 days AND obtain an additional medical evaluation in the Health Center to assess their health condition. The evaluation will determine if isolation or quarantine is required.

We have amended this process. Now, **all vaccinated students who test positive via our testing program will receive a medical evaluation and will be placed in isolation for 10 days**. The reason for this change is that the college required each student to present upon arrival a PCR test result obtained within 72 hours of moving back to campus. This singular test documented for us that students were not infected with active COVID-19 infections AND had no evidence of asymptomatic illness in the 90 days prior to arriving on campus. Knowing the pre-arrival negative tests reveal that none of our students have carried remnants of a past infection with them to campus, we will now acknowledge any new positive PCR tests as a valid positive indicating illness and requiring isolation. The isolation will be discontinued only after 10 days or, if documentation of a positive test within the last 90 days can be

provided (a few students were not allowed on campus because they had a positive PCR prior arrival for fall semester).

Weekly surveillance PCR testing for 10–15 percent of all vaccinated students will continue unchanged. Testing for students who are experiencing symptoms and any follow-up tests will continue at the Health Center on weekdays from 8:30 a.m.–10:00 a.m. and by appointment at other times. If you feel ill or are experiencing COVID symptoms, please call 860-297-2018 to schedule an appointment. Any student who tests positive in surveillance testing will be isolated for 10 days. Full details on are testing, quarantine and isolation policies are in our [COVID-19 FAQ's](#).

Staff and faculty who test positive should inform Human Resources and are asked to isolate at home until cleared by their health care provider. Staff and faculty who are exposed to someone with a confirmed COVID-19 infection as “close contacts” (either on campus or in their home communities) will follow the same procedures as fully vaccinates or unvaccinated/not fully vaccinated students. Employees who have questions about whether they should quarantine if they are identified as a close contact may contact Human Resources for additional guidance.

As we did last year, we have set aside a small number of spaces for quarantine and isolation housing. Our off-campus isolation housing is adjacent to campus and students in these locations will receive meal delivery and support. Students in these locations understand that they will not leave their living quarters while isolation.

Thank you for doing your part to *Protect the Nest* and keep our community healthy and safe. As a community we have been resilient throughout the pandemic, and we encourage you to remain diligent in adhering to health protocols.

Sincerely,

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