

Update on Isolation Protocols and COVID cases

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January 4, 2022

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

As you know from the news and your own experiences, the highly transmissible Omicron variant is now the dominant strain of COVID-19 in the United States, and it is fueling a surge in cases across the country. The widespread increase in cases creates a new operational reality for residential campuses such as ours as we work to preserve our most important principles as an academic community:

- Priority for the health, safety, and mental well-being of students, faculty, staff, and campus partners
- A commitment to maintaining an in-person learning experience
- A shared commitment to care for the community and mutual responsibility for everyone's health and safety

We are writing today with an update on the number of cases in our campus community, revised campus isolation policies, and reminders about our health and safety practices.

COVID-19 Dashboard Update

As of January 4, there are [35 positive student cases and 8 employee cases in our community](#), which were identified through our on-campus testing facility and self-reported test results.

Protocol for Isolation of Students Testing Positive for COVID-19

Last week [the CDC recommended](#) reducing the isolation period for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 from 10 days to five days. Their guidance in part reads:

People with COVID-19 should isolate for 5 days and if they are asymptomatic or their symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours), follow that by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others to minimize the risk of infecting people they encounter. The change is motivated by science demonstrating that the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after.

Earlier this evening the CDC issued [additional guidance](#) allowing for an isolation test-out option for people who test positive for COVID-19 but have no symptoms at day five of their isolation. The COVID-19 Steering Committee will evaluate this latest guidance to determine how best to make changes to our isolation protocols. We will update our community in the next few days.

Isolate In Place PILOT Plan

Given the reduced number of students on campus this January, we are piloting a plan to allow students who test positive to isolate in their place of residence. While we continue to set aside space for isolation housing, students would have three options for isolation after testing positive, depending on the circumstances of their regular residential situation:

- **Isolate at home**, with the expectation that travel occurs in private vehicles and not using public transportation or rideshare vehicles
- **Isolate in place** in their own residence if they sleep in a single-occupancy room or if all members of a one-room double/one-room triple/two-room quads test positive. A group bathroom in the building will be designated the isolation bathroom. Residents of the building who are not in isolation will be directed to use one of the other bathrooms in the building. Students that live in apartment style living (on or off campus) and who sleep in a

single occupancy room, will be able to isolate in that residence following the protocols as described in [the document](#).

- **Relocate to isolation housing** if roommates are not also positive.

We have provided detailed [guidance on isolation protocols](#), which has been supported as reasonable plans by public health and infection disease experts at Hartford HealthCare. As we stated earlier, we are committed to balancing the importance of physical health and safety with mental and emotional well-being. By creating a safe way for students to isolate in place, we are aiming to reduce the negative psychological effects that come with isolation.

Public Health Policy Reminders

In order to mitigate the spread of the virus, it is important that everyone remains vigilant regarding the wearing of masks indoors. Please adhere to this policy. Additionally, Mayor Luke Bronin has instituted a city-wide indoor mask mandate through the end of January. Students must continue to adhere to the policies outlined in the [community contract](#).

We will share more information in the coming days on remote work for employees and details about the weekly testing protocol beginning the week of January 18.

Thank you for your continued attention to protecting the health and safety of your peers and colleagues, especially during this stressful surge in cases.

Sincerely,

Jason Rojas, Chief of Staff and Associate Vice President for External Relations

Joe DiChristina, Vice President for Student Success and Enrollment Management