

From: [UVM Strong](#)
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The University
of Vermont

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
OFFICE OF OPERATIONS & PUBLIC SAFETY

January 11, 2022

Dear UVM Community,

We are quickly approaching two years of dealing with the impacts of COVID-19. Our collective efforts have been remarkable. Today, we face new and different challenges from the Omicron variant, but we are confident that as we have done in the past, we will navigate the challenges successfully, together.

As we begin a new semester, we thought it would be helpful to share our current thinking.

- UVM continues to offer **in-person instruction and student services**, following our 2021-22 academic schedule
- As is happening around the state and the nation, we anticipate that the UVM community too will see **increased positive COVID test results** among students, faculty, and staff
- Due to the vaccination requirement for the entire community and the additional booster requirement for students, we expect our population to weather this phase with little serious illness if any
- We are aware of **no cases of COVID-related hospitalization among our students** since the pandemic began—even before the vaccines were available
- We are **prepared to continue operations** even as COVID cases peak as expected in the coming couple of weeks
- Current indications are that the peak of **Omicron infections will pass by early February**
- Proposed changes in teaching modality will **follow the already-established process**

In September, Michelle Paavola, MD, Director of the Center for Health and Wellbeing provided information about COVID protocols. While many protocols remain the same, there have been some important changes. We have updated the [UVM COVID-19 guidelines](#) to reflect these changes. We have also updated information about [face coverings](#) and [other key university-wide policies](#).

We also want to offer more clarity on circumstances related to COVID-19 at this stage of the pandemic and reinforce some key terms that we hope you will find helpful:

Masks

Many will recall that in the early days of the pandemic we provided a small set of masks for everyone. We all hoped we would not have to do this again, but here we are. We have all read about the importance of well-fitting masks. UVM is making 3 KN95 masks available to all faculty, staff, and students for pickup in the coming days. We expect we will be able to set up the pickup near the Davis Center Covid Testing Center – we expect to finalize the logistics soon. Information on when and where to pick up the masks will be posted on [UVM Forward](#). Also note reports that KN95 masks [are reusable](#).

Isolation

Anyone who tests positive is required to isolate for a minimum of five days and possibly up to ten days. Individuals can leave isolation or return to work after day 5 if:

- They **never had symptoms**, or symptoms have improved, and they feel better, and
- They have had **no fever for at least 24 hours** without the use of medicine that reduces fevers, and
- They wear a mask around others through day 10.

Additionally,

- **Students are required** to have two negative rapid antigen tests performed at least 24 hours apart beginning no earlier than day 4 before ending isolation.
- **Faculty and staff** should also have two negative rapid antigen tests performed at least 24 hours apart beginning no earlier than day 4 before ending isolation. Contact Student Health Services and they can administer the rapid antigen tests.

We will continue to isolate on-campus students in Jeanne Mance and work with off-campus students to isolate in their apartments or homes as needed.

In order to respect medical privacy practices, Student Health Services cannot provide names of students, faculty or staff who test positive but can help with guidance on navigating COVID-19 situations with students and others.

Close Contacts

Individuals who have been informed that they are a close contact should:

- Get tested within 48 hours either at the Testing Center or with a rapid antigen test after being notified of the exposure
- Get a PCR test on or after day 5 from their exposure
- Wear a mask when they are in the presence of others (even in places where it may not be required) and limit contact with others until receiving a negative result from their day 5 test
- Watch for symptoms and get a rapid antigen test if symptoms develop

In addition to the above, close contacts who are unvaccinated or whose COVID-19 vaccines are NOT up to date are required to quarantine for five days and until they receive a negative test result. Having up to date COVID-19 vaccines means having additional booster doses at the recommended time points or additional doses for individuals who are immunocompromised.

Contact Tracing

Due to the Omicron variant-related surge in COVID cases, the Vermont Department of Health has updated its [guidance](#) to encourage individuals who test positive for COVID-19 to begin reaching out to close contacts immediately and not wait for a phone call from a contact tracer. Likewise, Student Health Services is prioritizing informing those who test positive over communicating with their close contacts. Following Vermont Department of Health guidance, and in response to the anticipated high volume of cases in coming weeks, Student Health Services will expect individuals who test positive for COVID-19 to begin reaching out to close contacts immediately. Student Health Services will provide guidance to those who test positive on how to identify and inform their close contacts and make clear that it is their responsibility to do so. When appropriate, we will partner with the Vermont Department of Health on contact tracing.

Symptomatic Testing

For UVM community members who develop COVID-like symptoms, rapid antigen testing is available on campus. Results from rapid antigen tests are obtained within 15 minutes and help quickly identify people who may be infected and contagious. A confirmatory PCR test will be performed at the same time. As an additional precaution, those who receive a negative rapid antigen test should avoid close contact with others while waiting for results from the PCR test.

Students needing rapid antigen tests must schedule an appointment for a rapid antigen test through the MyWellbeing portal or by calling Student Health Services at 802-656-3350.

Faculty and staff do not need to schedule an appointment and may walk into the testing site on the ground floor of Jeanne Mance Residential Hall at 394 Pearl St. Testing for the UVM community is available from 8:20 am to 11 am and 1:00 pm to 3:40 pm Monday through Friday. On Saturday, testing will take place at 425 Pearl St between 9:20 am and 12:00 noon.

Thank you for your continued support of our collective efforts at UVM. Our community is counting on you!

Patricia A. Prelock, Provost and Senior Vice President
Gary Derr, Vice President for Operations and Public Safety

