

**From:** Zehle, Christa H  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 24, 2021 3:30 PM  
**Subject:** Wednesday Wonders finally...

Dear Students,

It has been a while since I've written a Wednesday Wonders! The snow has mostly melted, the air is warmer, and I even saw some crocuses on the way into work this morning. However, the forecast is calling for cooler temperatures again and so our "real spring" hasn't yet come into full bloom. This is a good reminder that although we are headed in a great direction with more members of the community being vaccinated and the State of Vermont and national guidelines easing a bit, we still must remain vigilant in our commitment to protecting ourselves and the community around us. Below are a few reminders

### **All students**

#### **Clinical (per UVM Medical Center CMO update on Tuesday March 23, 2021):**

- UVMHC today 12+ patients (4 of which who are in ICU) (this remains the average for last several weeks).
- Vermont has a total of 24 patients hospitalized for COVID-19.
- Vermont State reported 850 new cases this past week; 61% higher than the previous week.
- We may see an upcoming uptick in COVID+ patients in the hospital from this increase.
- Cases are up in Northeast Kingdom, where vaccination rates are lower, and infections are up among people who are 40 and under.
- Vermont receiving 5,000 more vaccine doses than expected this week (state working on increasing NEK vaccination rate).
- Welcoming Policy: less restrictive policy ready to go once the state loosens guidance for hospitals.
- Planned reopening of conference rooms for in person essential meetings among vaccinated employees – soup to nuts communications to come soon.
- Employee Surveillance Asymptomatic Testing: completed 108 tests March 15-18, of which 106 were negative and 2 were invalid.
- Patient Asymptomatic Testing, as of March 19 report was starting to trend down:

**Mask Fitting and Shaving:** We continue to follow the recommendations of our clinical sites regarding PPE and best practices. The Director of Safety at UVM Medical Center released the safety policy to protect the health and safety of all affected UVM Medical Center staff to comply with the Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSH) respiratory protection regulations and issued the following about facial hair:

*Affected male staff with beards will be required to be clean shaven for their annual fit test. Shaving will be required during any type of outbreak where an affected employee is required to wear a tight-fitting respirator to perform their job function. If proper fit is not attainable with an N95 or other tight-fitting respirator a Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR) will be made available.*

Additional Information for PPE guidance for the patient care setting can be [found here](#).

### **IT information:**

The IT Help desk located next to the Dana Library is closed, however the IT department is available to assist all our students. For urgent matters, students may call the help desk at 802-488-5553. For non-

urgent matters, please submit a [Footprint](#) and a technician will get in touch with you. They are able to provide remote support and fix many issues utilizing remote options.

### **Shared Responsibility**

We received a message from a UVM employee who was asked by UVM Strong to contact us regarding violations of the [Green and Gold Promise](#) by some of our students. Their concern was regarding gathering outside without masks (even when not eating) in a large group (specifically the area outside of the Dana Medical Library concourse). This act caused members of the community to express concern for their own safety while trying to access a public space. We are thankful to the University for revising the current COVID-19 guidelines for medical students and approval of our gatherings for fully vaccinated medical students, following all Vermont (or appropriate state) requirements. We are asking you to remember, however, that although most medical students are fully vaccinated, many individuals on campus and in our community are not. Please remember to adhere to the UVM guidelines while on campus. These include:

**Face Coverings:** Members of the UVM community who have completed a full vaccine cycle are still required to follow UVM's [face covering guidance](#). Vaccinated individuals may still have the potential to transmit the virus to others; wearing a face covering reduces the risk to both the wearer and others around them. Regardless of vaccination status, you may remove your face covering while eating or drinking, provided that you are stationary and seated and you maintain a 6-foot distance from other people. Return your face covering to cover your nose and mouth as soon as possible after eating or drinking. If you are not seated or stationary, you should not be eating or drinking and must also keep your face covering on. The full guidance on face coverings can be found on UVM's Return to Campus website.

**Social Distancing:** Even if you have completed a full vaccine cycle, you are still required to maintain distancing at all times. This includes maintaining 6-foot distances in dining halls, common areas, offices, conference rooms and classrooms.

Thank you for all that you have done and continue to do to mitigate transmission of COVID-19 and to keep our community safe. We continue to monitor the updates provided by the local, state and national health experts and will continue to communicate changes as we receive them. Enjoy springtime and please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or if we can support you in any way. Be safe and be well.

With appreciation and gratitude,

Christa Zehle and the Office of Medical Student Education team