

Colleagues,

I hope everyone is enjoying a holiday season that provided an opportunity for rest and relaxation. As the New Year approaches and we continue to learn more about the COVID-19 Omicron variant, we have important updates to provide about our employee COVID-19 protocols.

Early indicators with Omicron point to a quick incubation period but for most people who have received COVID-19 vaccination boosters, mild symptoms. We continue to monitor local, state, and federal guidance and data to inform our campus-based decisions. Our time-tested practices of indoor mask wearing, robust student surveillance testing, and swift contact tracing made MCLA one of the safest places in Berkshire County for the Fall 2021 semester. We will refine these practices, policies, and procedures to kick-off Spring 2022 as safely as possible. _

[New Massachusetts DPH/CDC Isolation, Quarantine, and Exposure Protocols](#)

On December 29, 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) issued [new guidance](#) in alignment with the updated CDC recommendations on isolation, quarantine, and COVID-19 exposure. As we have done throughout the pandemic, MCLA will adopt these guidelines in consultation with our local DPH partners. We encourage you to visit the linked site above for detailed information but the CDC/DPH guidance is, in summary:

Positive COVID-19 Individuals (isolate), regardless of vaccination status:

- Stay home for 5 days
- If you have symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your house
- Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days (please note MCLA's indoor mask policy)

If you were exposed to someone with COVID-19 (quarantine)

Boosted/completed second dose of Pfizer or Moderna within the last 6 months/completed J&J within the last two months:

- Take a COVID-19 test on day 5, if possible
- Wear a mask around others for 10 days (please note MCLA's indoor mask policy)
- If you develop symptoms test and stay home

Unvaccinated or not boosted since eligible:

- Stay home for 5 days. After that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days (please note MCLA's indoor mask policy)
- COVID-19 Test on day 5, if possible

International Travel

If you are traveling internationally between semesters, over spring break or at any other time, please consult the latest [CDC guidance](#) for testing protocol and contact Human Resources.

Reporting Employee COVID-19 Cases

If you test positive for COVID-19 (either on an at-home rapid test or a PCR test) please alert your supervisor and Barbara Chaput, Executive Director of Human Resources, ASAP. This allows us to do appropriate contact tracing and get out swift notification to potentially exposed colleagues. Supervisors alerted to a positive case should also touch base with Human Resources for guidance.

As standard protocol, we advise all COVID-19 positive employees to connect with their primary care physician and the Berkshire Medical Center COVID-19 hotline (855-262-5465) for additional instructions and guidance regarding isolation.

With a new COVID-19 variant that exhibits milder symptoms for those who are fully vaccinated (including a booster) and new guidance for shortened isolations periods, the College is now offering employees the option for telework during an infection. Should you or a family member contract COVID-19, and you feel well enough to work or your family member has mild symptoms and needs minimal care, please consult with your supervisor and Human Resources about the possibility of telework during your isolation period. Faculty should reach out to VP Glejzer and Dean Janis, and include their Department Chairs on any communication

Massachusetts COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave

Should you need to be out of work due to contracting COVID-19 and need to recuperate, to care for a family member who has contracted COVID-19, or for other COVID-19 related circumstances, you can apply for [Massachusetts COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave](#), a law that is in effect until April 1, 2022. The law provides for up to one week of paid sick leave, to a maximum benefit of \$850.00, for specified reasons related to COVID-19. Part-time employees are eligible for leave for the number of hours that they normally work. Human Resources will communicate with qualifying employees about the application process.

COVID-19 Booster Requirement

Employees must submit a photo image of their COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card showing that they have received a booster shot to Human Resources at hr@mcla.edu, or a hard copy in person to Human Resources by April 15, 2022. Human Resources is currently located in the Garden Level of Eldridge Hall. Adjuncts working solely in the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education were required to be vaccinated by November 29, 2021. DGCE adjuncts will need to submit copies of updated vaccination cards that include booster information by May 29, 2022 to receive contracts to teach beyond Spring 2022.

For Massachusetts residents, <https://vaxfinder.mass.gov/> is a handy site to aid in scheduling booster appointments for you and your family members. NY residents can book appointments [here](#) and VT residents can book appointments [here](#).

We will continue to provide updates as the start of the Spring 2022 semester gets closer, including voluntary employee testing days and times.

The MCLA COVID-19 hotline continues to be available from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday - Friday for questions related to COVID-19 at 413-662-5550.

Thank you for your collective efforts to keep our campus community as safe as possible as we enter 2022. Best wishes for a healthy and happy New Year.

Sincerely,
Gina

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