

# Wabash.

January 18, 2021

To: Wabash Community  
From: President Scott Feller and Dr. Ann Taylor  
Re: Community Update for January 18, 2021

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Congratulations to our seniors who completed their oral comprehensive exams and good luck as you sit for written exams this week. The work of our faculty to adapt this important culmination of the Wabash experience is one of many demonstrations of our College's resilience and "Wabash Always Fights" attitude. Just as seniors have been looking back over the lessons they learned in the classroom, we have been reviewing the work of the fall semester and preparing for the high-stakes test that awaits us in this spring semester.

Our review of the fall semester was comprehensive, and these are the most important things for us to study as we prepare for the upcoming test:

- [Masking and physical distancing work](#). Disease transmission has not been observed in structured spaces, events, or activities. Classroom activities, Chapel Talks, athletic workouts, etc. do not need to be avoided and have the potential to be expanded to enhance the campus experience.
- Unstructured time in living units drives the spread of COVID in our community. We must support our students in their efforts to adapt their communal living to the realities of a highly contagious virus.
- Institutionally, our plan to "Test, Trace, and Isolate" is critical to mitigating COVID-19. We have made major investments in testing and tracing capacity over the past month. Last week we tested all student-athletes upon arrival, confirming their negative return-to-campus testing with CVS. We will continue this with weekly testing of all student-athletes who have not tested positive, even those whose sport is categorized as low-risk by the NCAA and would not require it. Based on our experience over the next two weeks with student-athletes, we plan to refine our processes with a goal of testing a much broader swath of the student body each week.
- Clear communication is valued by the Wabash community, but different groups prefer different styles. Faculty and staff appreciated the detailed and contextualized data and the thought process that went into various decisions. Students tended to favor a more focused and concise presentation. It is our plan to meet the needs of both groups by continuing these updates and, eventually, supplementing them with a dashboard of key metrics (positivity rate, number of students in isolation/quarantine, and county and regional risk levels). Additionally, we plan to

employ a color-coded campus risk level (red, orange, yellow, blue) that incorporates those metrics.

- We must redouble our efforts to meet the social and emotional needs of students during the spring semester. We are grateful that student leaders are focused on identifying safe activities and programs that meet those needs. We are hopeful that our athletic teams will be able to compete on a limited level to provide a spark of energy to lift our spirits. And the Healthy Campus Task Force has drafted a campus guest policy based on student comments that will be shared with student leaders this week for feedback.

Another thing we have learned is that the pace of change is challenging for every aspect of planning, and the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine is following that pattern. Previous conversations with the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) indicated that faculty and student-facing staff would be among the essential workers targeted for vaccination after healthcare workers and nursing home residents. That does not appear likely at this point. As recently as late December we had been asked to provide information on the number of employees meeting the state's essential worker definition and our capacity to host a vaccination clinic. But the ISDH has now pivoted to an age-based prioritization and its published plan [does not address essential workers](#). We are excited, however, that our county health department has opened a vaccination site in Crawfordsville. We remain in regular contact with both the Montgomery County Health Department and ISDH, and will communicate opportunities for employees and students to be vaccinated as information becomes available.

While we focus on a strong start to the spring semester, we are also looking ahead and have begun planning a Commencement Ceremony in May. These next four months will bring challenges, but also great opportunities. One of those opportunities happens this evening when we host Professor Nate Marshall for a virtual celebration of the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We urge everyone to join us for an evening with a rare talent and a great friend of Wabash College.

With gratitude for you and all you bring to campus,

President Scott Feller

Ann Taylor, Special Assistant to the President for COVID Response and Planning