



February 7, 2022

To: Wabash Community
From: President Scott Feller
Re: COVID Mitigation Update

Huge thanks to the Sodexo and Bon Appetit teams for keeping us safe and fed under difficult conditions and for the flexibility of the entire community during last week's snow storm. And a special shout out to Julia Phipps, Matt Weedman, and our colleagues in the Fine Arts for overcoming what must have been incredible challenges so that we could sit together in Salter Hall and share a communal experience of pure joy and fun at Thursday's magic show.

As the Omicron wave recedes, we have reached a point where we can take initial steps to relax restrictions on campus operations. Cases in Indiana and Montgomery County the past seven days are down about 45% from their peaks and, most importantly, cases on campus have remained at a low level for three weeks, comparable to what we managed throughout the fall semester.

It is worth acknowledging that the relatively small impact of Omicron on Wabash was not assured a month ago. All signs pointed toward a situation where we would be dealing with 50-100 cases per-week on campus, putting at risk our goal to provide residential education.

Through a combination of mitigation tactics that included return testing, a booster push, more and higher quality masking, and event restrictions – along with a little good luck (or good timing) – campus case numbers actually went down as our on-campus population increased.

Beginning Monday, February 7, we will take our first steps toward more normal operations by returning to where we began the fall semester: students and faculty will wear masks in classes, labs, and other instructor-led activities, and we will all mask up for any event expected to have more than 50 attendees. Building signage will be updated next week to reflect this change and will also emphasize that anyone coming out of isolation or quarantine needs to wear a mask. Food may be served at seminars, and vaccinated outside guests may attend campus events.

Additional steps, for example moving to where we ended the fall semester with an instructor choice mask policy, will be determined by our experience with this first step. Let's remain vigilant and attentive to our health so that we can continue down the path to more normal operations.

