



January 3, 2022

Dear Wabash,

In the two weeks since I last wrote to our community, tremendous progress has been made in characterizing the infectivity, immune escape, and severity of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. And in recent days this has led to updated guidance from public health officials and agencies.

While we await additional guidance from the Indiana Department of Health on details related to quarantine and isolation on a fully vaccinated campus, we learned enough last week to make the following decisions as we begin the spring semester:

- Students who are not current on their COVID-19 vaccination, i.e., they are eligible for but have not yet received a booster, **are required to submit a negative COVID-19 test** administered within 72 hours of their return to campus. Negative test results must be sent to [covid19testing@wabash.edu](mailto:covid19testing@wabash.edu).
- Students who have received a booster shot and have [uploaded it through the COVID Pass app](#) will not be required to submit a negative test to return to campus.
- Masks will be required during Comprehensive Exams and during the first two weeks of classes. A decision on the return to mask-optional classrooms will need further observation.
- Students who are not current on their COVID-19 vaccination will be subject to quarantine and asymptomatic testing unless their booster documentation is uploaded through the [COVID Pass app](#) by January 10, 2022.
- The College will distribute N95 masks to students, faculty, and staff through the Bookstore beginning next week.

Students should **schedule their COVID-19 test ASAP (today)** at a pharmacy, health department, or other testing site since capacity is in short supply both locally and across the country. Students for whom the testing cost or the cost of new travel arrangements due to a positive test is a burden [can apply for reimbursement](#). ***Note that a booster vaccination is easier to obtain, comes at no cost, and is the preferred option.***

The bottom line is that getting a booster shot ASAP is the most important thing you can do to avoid missing out on the activities of the spring semester due to isolation and quarantine. We have already had several student-athletes test positive on arrival and were sent home to isolate, miss practice, competition, and travel; none of them had received a booster shot.

Omicron is going to lead to some updated play calling and there are [no easy answers, only difficult tradeoffs](#), associated with each such changes. But, we began the fall semester with new tools to address the challenges brought by the Delta variant and there is no reason that we cannot repeat that success in the second semester.



As Dr. Joseph Allen of the Harvard School of Public Health wrote [summarizing](#) his recent *Washington Post* essay: “If you're vaccinated, and boosted, and wearing an N95, that's as low risk as anything in your life, *regardless of what anyone around you is doing.*” I recommend reading the [full essay](#) where he makes the point that our COVID playbook for 2022 must evolve from previous editions.

I realize people are frustrated by the continuing impact of the pandemic. I am especially worried for friends that work in a healthcare system overwhelmed by unvaccinated individuals. Last week, I read an essay, “[An I.C.U. Doctor’s Message of Hope Amid Omicron,](#)” that reminded me both that our COVID playbook is strong and that we shouldn’t let our frustration with the unvaccinated get in the way of acknowledging their humanity. If you only read one of the links in this message, make it this one.

Scott Feller