



November 30, 2021

Dear Wabash,

I hope you had a great Thanksgiving break! I want to amplify Professor Taylor's email on being mindful of our health this week as we return. Last week, four classes went on immersion trips, which is a great indicator of how far we have come in mitigating the effects of the pandemic, but does not signal the end of COVID-19. In order to continue to offer the fullest experience – on and off campus – we have to remain vigilant. I want to speak to two different ways that each of us can use to keep our community safe: non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) and booster shots.

The week before break was very busy at the Student Health Center! I am thankful that while over 100 students were seen and tested, only a single case of COVID was identified. While that gives me cause to celebrate the effectiveness of our vaccination program, it leaves me concerned that we are backsliding on the [NPIs](#) that keep us safe from viral pathogens.

Influenza and other respiratory viruses are highly transmissible and lead to absence from class and work. While only one student isolated due to COVID the week before break, several others had to return home to recover from the flu and they missed classes, events, and participation in athletics. If you haven't received a flu vaccine, please do so as soon as possible. I am also worried that the transmission of the respiratory viruses we have seen over the past few weeks indicate that we are susceptible to transmission of COVID-19 via breakthrough infections. While vaccination is by far the single most important way to reduce transmission, we know that no vaccine is perfect and that NPIs are an important layer in our defense.

Professor Taylor reminded us last week of the most important NPIs – doing the 3 W's and avoiding the 3 C's – and she made me reflect on my personal adherence to these principles. I realized that I have fallen badly in the area of hand hygiene. I did way too many handshakes during Monon Bell Week – when a wave or fist bump would have been the wise choice. I also failed to increase my frequency of hand washing or using hand sanitizer. I am going to redouble my efforts to adhere to best practices, including being aware of my surroundings and mitigating the spread of any respiratory virus.

I also want to share an important update on my previous [communication](#) on boosters. Yesterday, the CDC expanded its recommendation to say that those of us who received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines more than six months ago **should** get a booster shot. While the announcement was motivated by the appearance of the Omicron variant, the efficacy of the booster is well established and will provide important protection even if Omicron does not ultimately displace Delta. There is no reason to wait to see how Omicron plays out before scheduling a booster shot. It is a great way to keep your holidays or your spring semester from being disrupted.

Best of luck to all in finishing the semester strong. I am so proud of what this community has achieved and ask everyone to remain vigilant by using both the NPIs and the amazing vaccines available to us.

President Feller

