

Wabash.

January 31, 2022

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

I want to express my thanks to Nurse Amidon and our team of volunteers for providing the COVID vaccine booster clinic. Take a moment to think about how busy the Student Health Center team is and what a sacrifice it was for them to extend their week into Friday evening. We all owe a great debt to Nurse Amidon and the entire Healthy Campus Task Force. Please find a way to thank them for exceptional contributions.

I also want to thank the entire Wabash community for doing your part to contain COVID-19 transmission on campus. We will discontinue limits on athletic spectators starting this week and will continue to examine case numbers going forward as we continue to transition back to more normal operations.

Thanks also to everyone who gotten up to date on COVID-19 vaccination. Over 75% of booster-eligible students are up to date and a similar percentage of faculty and staff are, as well. We can now say that both our campus vaccination rate and our booster rate are approximately double those of the larger communities we live in.

The timing couldn't be better as it appears that Indiana is peaking at the [highest number of COVID-19 infections](#) of the entire pandemic. And in the past week, we have seen several reports from the CDC and various academic research groups confirming the effectiveness of booster shots [to reduce infections, hospitalizations, and deaths](#). We have heard so many anecdotes from vaccinated friends and family who have contracted Omicron that it is easy to forget that being current on your COVID vaccination significantly reduces the chance that you will be infected (and dramatically reduces the possibility of severe disease).

As I described [previously](#), characterizing vaccine effectiveness is complicated, but current evidence suggests that boosting reduces infections by at least 50% and likely more. I was encouraged by case numbers released by IDoH that gave a [78% VE](#) against Omicron infection, consistent with [reports from New York City](#) during this wave. I was also recently reminded by Dr. Wachter at UCSF that even with Omicron, only [a third of household contacts become infected](#) (even less among the vaccinated).

As we move into our fifth consecutive semester impacted by the pandemic, I invite you to join me in adopting an outlook that combines hope and caution. Hope based on the favorable trends we are seeing [nationally](#), our experience over the past four weeks with student-athletes, seniors, and now all students in residence. We began the semester with just 2% of students unavailable for class and only four students in campus isolation housing – and began our second week with lower numbers for both.

We must also proceed with caution because even if we have reached the peak of the Omicron wave, the implication is that as many people will become infected in the next six weeks as have during the past six.

I don't know about you, but I have many acquaintances who have had COVID recently. Acknowledging that the numbers will double before this wave concludes is an excellent way to remind me of the need to remain vigilant.

President Feller

