



July 21, 2021

Dear Wabash,

In late April we communicated that a decision on adding COVID-19 to the list of vaccinations required for students was possible, but that a decision would be made this summer when we had more information. As has been the case since March of 2020, that decision-making process has taken place in an environment of constantly evolving scientific understanding, frequent changes in the trajectory of the pandemic, and a limited ability to reliably model the future. To give just two of many examples, we saw case numbers in Indiana fall more than 80% since the end of spring classes, but we also saw the emergence of the Delta variant—both locally and nationwide—which has increased case numbers over the past few weeks and altered projection models upward for the early Fall.

While we worked to analyze the data and the recommendations of public health officials and to understand their implications on our programs, we also vigorously encouraged students, faculty, and staff to be vaccinated and to upload their vaccine cards. Many thanks to the Healthy Campus task force, which led these efforts, and our amazing IT Services team, which put together the [secure portal for vaccination documentation](#). I am particularly grateful to [Wabash Student Senate](#) leaders, who have been sharing their messages on how important vaccination is for return to a rich campus life.

These efforts at access and education have brought us to a point today where the vast majority of students, faculty, and staff have uploaded their vaccine cards ([higher than many colleges that announced vaccination requirements in the spring](#)). Thanks to all who have taken this step. However, we are now a little more than one month from the start of classes, and we have not yet reached universal vaccination, placing the student experience at risk this fall.

Therefore, after examining the scientific and medical issues, the important ethical considerations, and the effect on the educational experience that we can offer to our students in the coming academic year, I have decided **that Wabash College will require vaccination against COVID-19 for all students and employees for the fall semester.**

Such a decision, which goes against strongly held beliefs that some members of the community have shared with me, is made only after great consideration. In making this decision, we carefully examined all of the options that allow a mixed community of vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals to live and learn together. We care deeply about each and every Wabash man and his intellectual, emotional, and physical growth, and it is our academic judgment that the health and well-being of our entire community—and thus the ability to provide the exceptional quality and breadth of educational experience—requires that we add universal vaccination to our toolkit.

All of us want the most lively classroom discussions, competitive athletics, thoughtful visiting speakers, and an engaging return to our concert halls and theater stages. In his ruling this week affirming Indiana University's vaccination requirement, U.S. federal judge (and Wabash graduate) Damon Leichty specifically cited the benefit that universal vaccination provides in terms of a more fulfilling



college experience for students. Providing the best possible experience for our students—after all they have lost from the pandemic—is my highest priority for the coming year.

In just the last few weeks, we have seen a team dropped from the College World Series because of an outbreak, the cancellation of a Major League Baseball game, and an increasing number of Olympians who have contracted the virus and cannot compete. We must do all we can to avoid a similar situation on the Wabash campus, which could force the return of virtual classes or the cancellation of Chapel Sing, dedication of Little Giant Stadium, the Homecoming football game, and our Glee Club’s annual fall concert.

In the next few days, all students and employees who have not submitted vaccination documentation to the College will be contacted by email with a reminder on how to upload information, an offer of assistance in identifying a time and place to receive a vaccination, and information about applications for medical and religious exemptions.

As always, questions are welcomed as a legitimate and important component of any decision-making process. We invite you to first visit the FAQ section of our [COVID web page](#). Additional questions should be directed to [covid@wabash.edu](mailto:covid@wabash.edu).

Sincerely,

Scott Feller  
President