

Dear QU Community

Over the next few days, students will begin arriving on the Quincy University campus, in preparation for the 2021 fall terms. We are excited to welcome our new and returning students, in what promises to be a much more normal academic year.

With that said, and in light of recent challenges with a local and national increase in COVID-19 cases, we at QU have been reviewing some new and updated public health guidance for colleges and universities. Today's email update summarizes many of QU's policies and procedures for the upcoming academic terms. Additional information will be published in the Student Handbook and other university emails and outlets. Please read the current message carefully.

This message is the ninety-first update on Quincy University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have plenty of experience at managing the challenges of COVID-19, Hawks, and we welcome your questions about COVID-19 and the new academic year.

The Really Quick Summary for Students

The current message applies to all students who will take at least one face-to-face course on the Quincy University campus during Fall 2021 and to all students living on campus during Fall 2021. There is a separate section below for faculty, staff, and vendor employees.

If you are a vaccinated student, we believe you will have a fairly normal experience at QU for Fall 2021. You will have access to the campus activities of a typical QU semester, and you will eat in the cafeteria. You won't need to ask permission to visit friends in other residence halls. You won't normally wear a mask when you are outdoors. You will have to mask for all classes when the risk of COVID-19 infection in Adams County is high or significant, and we will strongly recommend that you mask in all public areas until the Adams County COVID-19 risk goes down. You will not have to quarantine unless you test positive for COVID-19, though vaccinated people who are exposed to COVID-19 will need to symptom-watch and report any symptoms requiring another COVID-19 test. Vaccinated students will probably not have to participate in any COVID-19 surveillance testing. Finally, vaccinated students will not be charged for COVID-19 testing or any other COVID-19 related activities during the fall terms.

If you are a student and are not vaccinated, things will be much better than they

August 7, 2021

were a year ago, with meals in the cafeteria and access to the campus activities of a typical QU semester. As was the case for all students last year, unvaccinated students in the current year will need to ask permission to visit friends in other residence halls. Also, **you will have to wear a facemask** whenever you are indoors and in public, and you will have to quarantine if you are exposed to COVID-19. If you are unvaccinated and are NOT a student-athlete, you may have to do some COVID-19 surveillance testing throughout the semester. If you are an unvaccinated student-athlete, you definitely will have to participate in COVID-19 surveillance testing. The frequency of surveillance testing is still being determined. Beginning in November 2021, the university may charge a fee of \$25.00 for each surveillance test taken by an unvaccinated student.

Here's the More Detailed Version for Students

The pandemic still exists in Quincy, in the Midwest, and wherever you and your family live. According to the CDC, the risk of COVID-19 transmission in Adams County (IL) and in the counties surrounding QU is “substantial” or “high.” However, **the vast majority of people who are now experiencing the harmful effects of the pandemic are the people who aren't vaccinated.** For example, of the **51 people who were admitted for COVID-19 related complications** to Blessing Hospital in Quincy over the past seven days, **all 51 were unvaccinated.**

Until the pandemic is over, all of us at QU will still need to modify our behavior, even though the vaccines have made it much easier to remain safe and healthy.

It continues to be our intent at QU to respond to public health guidance we have received from the federal government, state government, local government, the NCAA, and organizations with special subject-matter expertise related to higher education and COVID-19. As a Catholic and Franciscan university, we also respond to the moral and religious guidance we have received from diocesan, provincial, and Vatican official channels, especially regarding vaccination. The guidance we have received from various public health sources has been contradictory in a few cases, and we have resolved those conflicts to the best of our ability.

Our overarching goal in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic is to respect QU's Catholic identity while following pandemic-related public health guidance. We will work to achieve this goal while seeking to provide a nearly normal classroom and campus experience for our students.

ALL STUDENTS and other members of our community should be aware of the

following throughout Fall 2021:

- Unless you are told otherwise by a university administrator, masking is not required when out-of-doors at Quincy University.
- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to take unexpected turns, and, in the past, policymakers have sometimes made quick decisions that affect us at QU. We will continue to respond to the best of our ability to the changing public-health advice we receive, and we at QU can change our policies and procedures at any time and for what we think are good reasons. So, please be patient if we announce important changes to our policies and procedures, consistent with changes in disease trends and with new medical information. We may also have to change our policies and procedures because of new laws or regulations enacted by the State of Illinois or, for student-athletes, new requirements created by the NCAA or our athletic conference.
- As previously announced, **QU does NOT presently require COVID-19 vaccination** for students, faculty or staff, but **vaccination is strongly encouraged**. A change in Illinois law, a more severe COVID-19 outbreak, or new guidance from the Catholic Church might lead us to revise QU's vaccination policy.
- As a general rule, recent public health guidance has emphasized the critical importance of vaccination for managing this disease and the benefits in certain cases of wearing facemasks to prevent new COVID-19 infections. While physical distancing can have value in preventing the spread of COVID-19, QU will prioritize vaccine education and access and appropriate facemask use in the coming academic year. Normal, pre-pandemic classroom layouts have been returned to our classrooms, and normal seating has been re-established in the cafeteria. However, distancing may be required in certain offices or other inside rooms at the reasonable request of a faculty or staff member.
- All students and employees, whether vaccinated or not, must cooperate fully with contact tracing so that COVID-19 disease transmission can be minimized.

If you are a **FULLY VACCINATED student**, and based on our current information, here's what you should know:

- You need to provide **proof of full vaccination** whenever you arrive on campus, if you haven't done so already. If you complete your vaccination during the fall semester, after arriving on campus, please provide your proof of vaccination to Dr. Tracy at the earliest opportunity.
- You must always wear a **facemask** at certain times while on campus. You will always wear a facemask while on a **campus shuttle or bus** or when using **team transportation**. You will always wear a facemask when using **campus health services** or when seeing an **athletic trainer**.
- You **must always wear a facemask in the classroom when the risk of COVID-19 transmission in Adams County, Illinois, is "high" or "substantial."** When risk is high or substantial, it also is strongly **recommended that vaccinated people wear facemasks in all indoor public settings**. People at QU are always welcome to wear facemasks for their own protection and for the protection of others. The university will update you regularly on the risk of COVID-19 transmission in Adams County.
- At present, it is unlikely that you will have to participate in **surveillance testing** for COVID-19 infections. You should immediately be tested for COVID-19 if you have even one COVID-19 symptom.
- You will only need to **quarantine**, whether on or off campus, if you test positive for COVID-19. Vaccinated people who are exposed to COVID-19 will need to symptom-watch and report any symptoms requiring another COVID-19 test
- You will **NOT be charged** by QU for any COVID-19 surveillance testing or other COVID-19 testing activities.

If you are an **UNVACCINATED student**, and based on our current information, here's what you should know:

- You will need to provide **proof of a negative COVID-19 test**, taken in the previous 48 hours, when you check in on campus.
- **Throughout the fall semester, you will need to wear a facemask at all times when indoors and in a public setting.** If you live in a residence hall, you are welcome to remove your mask when in your room alone or when your roommate is the only person present. In short, if you are indoors anywhere

other than your residence hall room, you will be wearing a mask unless you are eating or drinking. There are only a very few and specific exceptions to this rule.

- As was the case last year for all students, unvaccinated students will need to ask permission to visit friends in other residence halls. Permission for an unvaccinated student to visit another residence hall can only be granted by Dr. Tracy or her designee.
- If conditions require us to do so, **unvaccinated non-athletes may be required to participate in surveillance testing during the fall semester.** However, no surveillance testing of unvaccinated non-athletes is currently scheduled.
- **Unvaccinated student-athletes at QU will be required to participate in surveillance testing several times during the fall semester.** Unvaccinated student-athletes participating in fall and winter sports should expect to be tested at least once a week during their competition season. Some or all unvaccinated student-athletes will be tested each week throughout the fall semester, even for students who only compete in the spring.
- Separate from surveillance testing, you should immediately be tested for COVID-19 if you have even one COVID-19 symptom.
- You will need to **quarantine**, whether on or off campus, if you have tested positive for COVID-19 or if you have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. (We had a similar quarantine policy last year for students who were not vaccinated.)
- Beginning in November 2021, the university, at its sole discretion, may **charge a fee of \$25.00** for each surveillance test taken by an unvaccinated student. If charged, these fees may be added to your university account.
- Unvaccinated students are **strongly encouraged to consider vaccination.** The COVID-19 vaccine comes with very few and very minor risks and is highly safe and effective. Dr. Tracy can always assist students in arranging for vaccination.

For Faculty, Staff, and Vendor Employees

The faculty and staff guidance (including vendor employees) for vaccination and

masking is substantially similar to the student guidelines.

Unvaccinated faculty and staff are required to wear a facemask in all public indoor settings. They are welcome to go without masks only in private offices or when eating and drinking. Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, outdoor masking is not required.

Vaccinated faculty and staff must wear facemasks and adopt other methods of mitigating the risk of COVID-19 transmission when directed to do so by the university.

At the moment, Adams County, Illinois, and our surrounding counties currently are designated as having high or substantial risk of COVID-19 transmission. **Until further notice, all fully vaccinated faculty are required to wear facemasks while teaching face-to-face classes.** Exceptions, usually involving face shields, have been approved by Dr. Reed, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, for some lab courses. Any vaccinated faculty colleague with questions about facemask use should contact Dr. Reed or the relevant dean.

Also, and until further notice, the university **strongly recommends** that all **fully vaccinated faculty, staff, vendor employees, and visitors** should **wear facemasks in all in-door public settings.** All members of the Cabinet will be wearing facemasks in these settings until there is a significant decline in the risk of COVID-19 transmission in Adams County.

Additional information about COVID-19 policies and procedures will be made available to faculty, staff, and vendor employees throughout the year, normally by the Office for Human Resources or by the relevant supervisor.

Conclusion

Much more information about QU's COVID-19 policies and procedures will be available on the university's COVID-19 website and in the Student Handbook. Again, the university's COVID-19 policies and protocols are subject to change and might be revised at any time, without prior notice.

There's a great deal to consider in this message, Hawks. The bottom line is we want every member of our community to have a great experience this fall, while staying safe. Please let us know your questions and concerns.

Sincerely,
Dr. Brian McGee, President
Dr. Christine Tracy, Vice President for Student Development

P.S. Many public health agencies and higher education organizations are asking universities to help correct errors and misperceptions related to COVID-19 vaccination. So, we will correct one such error in today's email. It has been reported by several sources on the internet that COVID-19 vaccination may interfere with the ability of women to get pregnant and have healthy babies. **This claim is not true**, as no credible evidence supports it. We should also add that no evidence indicates that vaccination affects male fertility. For more information, see this interview with a Penn State University physician and expert on infectious diseases: <https://news.psu.edu/story/663939/2021/07/16/are-covid-19-vaccines-associated-fertility-issues>

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