

Dear Quincy University community:

Welcome to the new semester, Hawks! Classes begin tomorrow at 8:00 a.m. We will be excited to see you at the North Campus, in Francis Hall, and around campus.

As the fall term begins, please remember that **all people attending a class or laboratory meeting must wear masks for the entire meeting**, unless Dr. Tracy has approved a medical excuse for a specific person. Face shields may be used a few classes, with the permission of Dr. Reed, the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

With the exception of the universal mask mandate in classes and laboratories, **unvaccinated persons at QU must wear masks whenever they are indoors**, unless they are in their own residence hall room, are showering or grooming, or are eating or drinking. **Vaccinated persons are strongly encouraged to wear masks indoors**, but they are not currently required to do so unless they are in a class or laboratory or have been directed to wear a mask by a person in authority. (Here's a Very Friendly Hint: President McGee and Dr. Tracy are most definitely "persons in authority.")

This message is the ninety-second update on Quincy University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here's our review of the COVID-19 situation for the Quincy University community:

1. **There are no active COVID-19 student infections at present.** However, four students had positive COVID-19 tests when they were tested off-campus prior to QU check-in. Those students are in quarantine off campus and will not be able to come to campus until their quarantine is completed.
2. We are continuing to get new information about student, faculty, and staff vaccinations. At the present time, **68% of QU students** (excluding students only taking online courses) have been partially or fully vaccinated, and almost all of those are fully vaccinated. **87% of our full-time faculty and staff have been partially or fully vaccinated**, and almost all of those are fully vaccinated. **For our entire community, 71% of our target faculty, staff, and student population has been vaccinated**, exceeding the 70% goal we set in May 2021.
3. On Wednesday, March 18, 60 unvaccinated students were tested for COVID-19, even though those students reported no COVID-19 symptoms. This sort of large-scale testing or screening for COVID-19 infections is called **surveillance testing**. **Of those 60 unvaccinated students, all tested negative for the COVID-19 virus.** We will continue to conduct surveillance testing throughout the fall semester, with an initial focus on unvaccinated student-athletes. Additional surveillance testing, possibly to include all unvaccinated and vaccinated students, will be conducted if necessary, though testing of unvaccinated students is far more likely than of vaccinated students. QU uses "rapid" COVID-19 antigen testing for this purpose, which is quick and painless.
4. Student, faculty, staff, and vendor employees continue to **get vaccinated** each week. Vaccination is free, vaccination is quick, and vaccination is very safe and highly effective. President McGee, Dr. Tracy, and all the members of their immediate families have been vaccinated. Please join us and get vaccinated unless your physician tells you not to do so.
5. We know that some QU students may be required to participate in **COVID-19 surveillance testing provided through their local employers in Quincy or nearby communities**. We ask all students to report their test results to Dr. Tracy.
6. Faculty, staff, and vendor employees should continue to seek out COVID-19 testing when they have one or more COVID-19 symptoms. Those faculty, staff, and vendor employees seeking to arrange a rapid COVID-19 test on campus should contact Dr. Tracy directly.

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7. By far, the best way to reduce our risk for COVID-19 infection and serious illness is vaccination. **Masking, distancing, and good hand hygiene** also can be important ways to reduce risk. All members of the QU community should continue to follow public health safety guidelines.
8. For any student currently living on the QU campus and for all employees, it is essential that students, faculty, and staff **report symptoms** of anything that might be COVID-19 as soon as possible. While some of us might be tempted to avoid reporting a symptom on the grounds that the symptom seems minor, a healthcare professional, not an individual student or employee, should make this determination. **There is no acceptable reason for failing to inform us about a medical symptom that might point to COVID-19.**
9. **If you intend for any reason to have a COVID-19 test** or you have taken a COVID-19 test not arranged by the university, no matter where you are living right now, **please contact Dr. Tracy** with the details of your situation.
10. New guidance regarding COVID-19 testing, safety, and quarantine protocols continues to be announced by federal, state, and county sources. Updates to our policies and procedures will be announced by email as those updates are available.

If you are a member of the QU community and have not read the previous update messages, you could search them out in your email folders or read them at <https://www.quincy.edu/coronavirus/>. If you are new to QU, we assure you those updates make for riveting reading and include exciting reflections on the campus squirrel population, Star Wars, and the gastronomic benefits of regular waffle consumption.

Local and State Reports on COVID-19 Cases

As background for our safety measures at QU, we continue to report local and statewide COVID-19 information to all members of our community. Because the pandemic was declared well over a year ago, it is no longer useful to report total case numbers. We will continue to provide active case counts and current hospitalizations. In the **Quincy region (i.e., Adams County)**, there were over 100 active cases late last week. There are 45 current hospitalizations in Adams County linked to COVID-19. Since the beginning of the pandemic, one Missouri resident has died in Adams County of causes related to COVID-19, as have 135 Adams County residents.

Information about COVID-19 cases in Illinois, including county-by-county reports, is available at <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx>. This website includes the sobering reminder that almost 24,000 Illinoisans have died so far as a result of COVID-19 infections. QU updates on COVID-19 cases are taken from the public reports of state and county agencies.

Missouri reports its COVID-19 cases for the past seven days and does not provide daily updates to its COVID-19 summary. Information about COVID-19 in Missouri is available at <https://showmestrong.mo.gov/data/public-health/>.

Announcements

Today, many of our transfer students went through orientation. Again, welcome to QU!

As we repeatedly announced last spring, the **Roman Catholic Church** recognizes that **COVID-19 vaccines are morally acceptable**. **Pope Francis** and other Church leaders have repeatedly urged that **all of us who are eligible to do so should be vaccinated**. The leaders of almost all religious organizations in the world take the same position in favor of vaccination. Please speak with President McGee, Fr. John Doctor, or Jessica Howell if you would like more information about the Catholic position on vaccination.

As many of you know, **Adams County, Illinois**, currently is considered at **high risk** for COVID-19 transmission, along with the other counties in our region. If you are away from campus and are unvaccinated, you should wear your mask while indoors. If you are away from campus and are vaccinated, we strongly recommend that you wear a mask while indoors.

Finally, we remind you that **National Waffle Day** is Tuesday, August 24, when we celebrate the 152nd glorious anniversary of the patent for the waffle iron. As President McGee treats waffles as one of the major food groups, a celebration of the waffle is always in order. For the convenience of our students, our next “Chicken and Waffles with McGee” will take place on **Saturday, August 28**, from 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. in the cafeteria. McGee’s prized possession, a 1962 Westinghouse waffle iron, will make an appearance.

Have a great first day of class, Hawks. Congratulations to all our raffle winners at tonight’s picnic.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian McGee, President

Dr. Christine Tracy, Vice President for Student Development

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