

Dear Quincy University community:

Today's message is the 106th update on Quincy University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a special edition marking the conclusion of the 2021 Fall Semester and the end of the calendar year.

Here's our summary of the COVID-19 situation for the Quincy University community, as we look back on Fall 2021:

1. Because of requirements imposed in August 2021 by the state of Illinois, all colleges and universities in the state, including QU, required COVID-19 testing for unvaccinated and partially vaccinated members of our community. In addition, all members of our community had access to testing through Fall 2021 if they had one or more COVID-19 symptoms. About **2,000 COVID-19 tests** were administered on the QU campus during the semester.
2. **At QU, a total of 20 students, five staff members, and two faculty tested positive for COVID-19 during Fall 2021.** For the past semester, QU is not aware of any hospitalizations resulting from COVID-19 infections among the members of our community. Some of the students who had positive tests did not have full-time course schedules. One infected student only took online courses.
3. For those students and employees we anticipate will return to campus in Spring 2022, QU's current all-community vaccination rate is **84%**. Among students, **82%** are vaccinated, while **95%** of employees are vaccinated. As you know, members of our community have the option to seek religious or medical exemptions from COVID-19 vaccination, with the requirement that anyone not fully vaccinated will test weekly for COVID-19 infection.
4. **All unvaccinated or partially vaccinated students, faculty, and staff received separate information about their weekly COVID-19 testing.** Please direct questions about this state of Illinois requirement for weekly testing to Dr. Tracy.
5. We know that some QU students have been 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. Over the winter break, and throughout the year, faculty, staff, and business partner employees should continue to **seek out COVID-19 testing** when they have one or more COVID-19 symptoms. Those faculty, staff, and business partner employees seeking to arrange a rapid COVID-19 test on campus should contact Dr. Tracy directly

7. **Even during the holidays, 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.

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/>.

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. QU updates on COVID-19 cases are taken from the public reports of state and county agencies.

Effective October 31, 2021, **Adams County, Illinois**, no longer maintains a COVID-19 tracking dashboard. Information about COVID-19 cases in **Illinois**, including county-by-county reports, is available at <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/>. As of December 17, 2021, the state of Illinois lists 163 deaths attributable to COVID-19 in Adams County, dating to the beginning of the pandemic.

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

Congratulations to our Fall 2021 Quincy University graduates! We are proud of you.

Since the end of the fall semester, you have likely seen news reports about the new **Omicron variant of COVID-19**. As of today, there is considerable uncertainty about the risks associated with Omicron. Depending on the guidance we receive from the federal government and the state of Illinois, there may be new or significantly revised COVID-19 requirements for Spring 2022. We ask you to be patient as QU waits to receive new information. It is possible that we will receive such information and have to respond to multiple new directives between now and mid-January. When we receive that information, we will give you new guidance with our usual mix of patience, complaints about squirrels, and good wishes expressed in Klingonese, Huttese, and the like.

For the moment, we expect the 2022 Spring terms to look much like Fall 2021, with face-to-face classes and requirements for COVID-19 vaccination or weekly testing, along with indoor masking requirements. **If the requirements change, we will email you about those changes as quickly as circumstances allow.** In the next few weeks, **please look for email messages from Dr. Tracy** about our **return-to-campus requirements**, including those specifically affecting many student-athletes.

Since you received our last COVID-19 update email, a series of announcements have been made by the federal government about vaccination mandates for large employers like QU and for healthcare workers, including students in certain majors at QU. Because of federal lawsuits, there has been some confusion about which of these new federal vaccination requirements are taking effect, and when. Please look for emails specific to your situation from President McGee, from Dr. Tracy (for students), or from other vice presidents (for faculty and staff). Students in our joint degree programs with Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing & Health Sciences will also receive information from BRCN. Because of the uncertainty caused by ongoing legal cases, we ask that you follow the vaccination guidance we provide, rather than relying on media reports that are not always complete or reliable.

During 2021, most members of the QU community have received the original two-shot vaccination series with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, or the original one-shot dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccination. Much more recently, some of us, including President McGee and Dr. Tracy, have also received an additional **booster** shot of the vaccine. We encourage all members of the QU community to seriously consider vaccination and, for those who are vaccinated but have not had the booster, to seek out the booster shot. Dr. Tracy can answer questions about receiving the booster shot in Quincy. **There is some early evidence that vaccines are more effective against Omicron when a person also has had a booster.**

Throughout the holiday season, we strongly encourage all members of our community to wear masks indoors during their travels and to take special care when interacting with those who have special risk factors related to COVID-19, including the elderly and immunocompromised. Any member of our community who may have been exposed to a person testing positive for COVID-19 should contact Dr. Tracy for guidance about quarantine requirements. Any community member who has one or more symptoms associated with COVID-19 should seek out COVID-19 testing without waiting for their return to campus. Those who return to campus and have one or more symptoms should immediately seek out COVID-19 testing from Dr. Tracy or

a healthcare provider. All COVID-19 test results should be reported immediately to Dr. Tracy.

This has been a tough year, Hawks. According to official reports, **over 800,000 Americans have lost their lives because of COVID-19**, since the start of the pandemic. All of us have either had the virus or known someone who has had it. Earlier this month, we learned that **one in every 100 Americans over 65 has now died from COVID-19**. We should continue to learn and to live lives full of joy and meaning, but we should also remember all those we have lost and pray for the healing of suffering families.

While many of us will take measures to protect the safety of our families during the holidays, I hope each of you will greatly enjoy the holiday break and any time you are able to spend with family and friends. At this Catholic and Franciscan university, a great many members of our community are looking forward to the conclusion of Advent and a wonderful Christmas season. Because Christmas does not end in the Catholic tradition until after the New Year, you should expect to see some Christmas decorations on campus until January 9, 2022. For those of us celebrating Christmas, we wish you the happiest of Christmases and encourage you to include mass or church attendance in your plans for this week.

Finally, as we look back at another semester filled with challenges, we could not be more proud of the QU community and the response of our students, faculty, and staff to adversity. Thank you for all you have done to take care of yourselves, to care for one another, and to keep this community safe. At the same time, we've had no shortage of fun and have made many great memories, all while doing our critically important academic work.

Have a great holiday, Hawks. You deserve it. We'll see you soon!

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian McGee, President

Dr. Christine Tracy, Vice President for Student Development