

COVID-19 Alert Level Plan and Related Actions

March 26, 2021

At Western New England University, the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff, are of paramount importance. The University will continue to take an analytics-based approach to determine whether to offer a majority of classes on-ground, per our current plan.

Importantly, over the last few months, scientific guidance has changed, and our campus experience to date indicates that some aspects of the plan put in place last fall should be changed. In particular, our prior experience and current guidance indicate that moving to online instruction under an Orange Alert may not be necessary or helpful to the health of the greater community. This change is explained below.

These changes have received a thorough analysis by the President; the members of the University's Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT) which includes all the Vice Presidents and Deans of the University; the President of the University Senate; a faculty advisory group composed of health care and biology experts from the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Department of Biomedical Engineering; as well as Health and Counseling Services. The revised response strategies attached to each revised Alert Level as outlined below are consistent with recent guidance provided by our external public health partners, including local and state Departments of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

It is important to note that the University continues to have no known spread of the virus within classroom settings.

Until a larger number of students and staff become vaccinated, our primary protection remains in wearing our masks, observing distancing rules, and practicing proper personal hygiene. However, the University is prepared to respond to any increase in cases through quarantine (segregating close contacts of known positives), isolation (segregating known positives), and shelters in place (in which a residence group may be directed to remain in place until further analysis of positive cases). The University will also respond with restrictions to on-campus interactions, and protecting the campus at all Alert Levels by dismissal of students who violate health and social conduct rules.

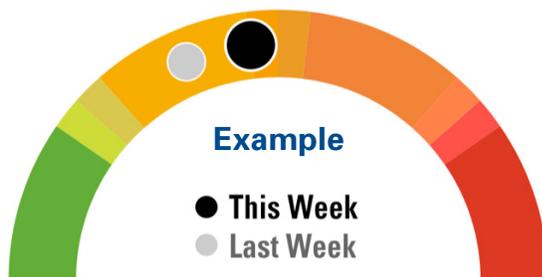
CASES OF COMMUNITY SPREAD

A community spread means that people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected. If a community spread of COVID-19 is determined, the University will close the relevant area(s) for a period of 72 hours. During that time, the area will go through deep cleaning protocols until it is determined to be safe for community members to re-enter that area. Should such an event occur, the University will notify the community via RAVE alert, an all-campus email, and postings to the COVID-19 website (wne.edu/coronavirus). Classes/events normally held in the area will be moved to a remote learning format until the area can be reopened. Should a community spread occur in a residence hall, students may be directed to quarantine in their current residence, move to another part of the building, or be temporarily provided accommodation in another residence hall on campus.

WESTERN NEW ENGLAND UNIVERSITY ALERT COLORS

Western New England University has adopted an amended four-color alert system, guided by a set of key internal and external measures (metrics) as shown below, to provide guidance to the campus community regarding the current level of risk present on campus and to inform key operational decisions that need to be made. However, it is unlikely that all the measures within a single week will be in the same color. The University may therefore report an alert level which combines two colors to indicate this or to show our current trend. For example, yellow may become yellow-orange rather than orange if we see a worrisome trend not yet fully evident in the metrics. This change is embedded in the new Alert Dial which will now be used to represent our current Alert status.

WNE'S ALERT SYSTEM OVERVIEW	
Green	Cases are rare. Remain vigilant with daily health checks, practice good hygiene, observe physical distancing, and wear face coverings.
Yellow	There are relatively few numbers of cases on campus. The sources are known. Be extra vigilant about limiting contact and continue all Green protocols. Deep cleaning protocols in affected locations and related actions will be implemented, per the community spread protocol.
Orange	Cases are more common, and two or more small definable clusters are evident. Campus to remain operational with the potential to shift to online, but all dining services will become "Grab 'n Go" only, with food being delivered to sections of campus as needed. Instruction will not be automatically moved online, but may be adjusted based on data as conditions warrant. In-person meetings may be restricted and social gathering rules adjusted. Increased testing will occur.
Red	Widespread outbreak with many undetected cases. A large and growing number of cases. Take strong measures to limit all contact. Campus Shutdown Plan to be implemented.



The metrics outlined on the next page are utilized to make a data-based decision on the appropriate color alert for the University. They have been amended from the prior plan based on our increased ability to 'flex' the available isolation and quarantine housing. This makes the percentage of beds used less relevant than the actual number of cases to understanding the state of the campus and our now enhanced understanding about the role of classroom contact in the spread of COVID-19.

The metrics are not absolute, and the color alert will always reflect more than the metrics themselves. We

may, for example, become aware of a large unsanctioned gathering before any cases resulting from the event would become apparent in the weekly metrics. Alternatively, 16 weekly positive tests will equate to an orange status, but this needs to be combined with the other metrics in determining the overall color alert, and may be further contextualized if five cases are all in one off-campus house.

Our prior experience and current guidance indicate that moving to online instruction under Orange Alert may not be necessary or helpful to the health of the greater community. Students, who may have been exposed, went home in large numbers during both the week of online classes and the Berkshire Hall shelter in place in Spring 2021. A few of these students later tested positive after exposing family members. It is important to remember that throughout the fall and spring semesters, there has been no reported or known evidence of spread from in-person classes on the campus.

 WESTERN NEW ENGLAND UNIVERSITY WNE STAY SAFE STAY GOLDEN	Green	Yellow	Orange	Red
Indicator *Regional Data Weight—10%				
Springfield Average Daily Incidence Rate per 100,000—14 day average	Fewer than 15	16-32	33-48	49 or higher
Hampden County Average Daily Incidence Rate per 100,000—14 day average	Fewer than 15	16-32	33-48	49 or higher
Springfield hospitals daily census as percent of capacity (ICU and non-ICU)	Fewer than 30%	30-50%	51-80%	Greater than 80%
Hampden county hospitals COVID-19 census—seven day average	Fewer than 20	21-40	41-75	Above 75
Springfield and county percent positivity in last 14 days	Fewer than 5%	5-9%	9.1-15%	15.1% and greater
Indicator WNE Data Weight—90%				
No. of Positive Tests in the Last Seven Days	<=5	6-14	15-45	Red >45
No. of Community Members in Isolation On Campus	<=5	6-20	21-39	>40
Total No. of Community Members in Isolation On Campus or Off Campus	<=5	6-20	21-60	>60
No. of Community Members in Quarantine On Campus	<=10	11-30	>30	N/A
No. of Community Members in Quarantine On Campus or Off Campus	<=10	11-50	>50	N/A
Weekly Positivity Rate	<.5%	.5%-1.5%	1.6%-3%	>3%
Number of Community Spread Incidents in the Past 7 Days	0-1	2	3	Greater than 3

*The University will monitor all key metrics for Springfield and surrounding communities.

The University's Alert System model builds on work done at Elon University and based on a COVID-19 Plan Guide and Self-Assessment for Higher Education published by the Center for Health Security at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, and Tuscany Strategy Consulting.

GREEN

- **Campus Open, Cases Are Rare**
- **Remain Vigilant with Basic Safety Protocols**

When in Green, the campus community must remain vigilant in practicing all health and safety protocols. Face coverings, physical distancing, and hygiene protocols are still to be observed at all times. In this phase, instruction will be offered in the combination of formats originally outlined at the start of the term, which for Spring 2021 is a combination of in-person, hybrid, and online courses. Daily enhanced cleaning protocols of high touch surfaces and common areas, such as bathrooms, is the norm. Most University services will be offered in a normal way, but will be subject to the restrictions imposed by masking and distancing requirements and basic gathering limitations. The University's random testing of the asymptomatic campus population, which will include at least 500 individuals, will be in effect during this phase, with the weekly posting of results to the University's COVID-19 website.

YELLOW

- **Cases Are Uncommon**
- **Remain Vigilant with Additional Safety Protocols**
- **Deep Cleaning Protocols Are Implemented as Necessary**

During this phase, the University will continue to follow the protocols outlined in Green while adding additional restrictions and safety measures. There remain relatively few cases on campus and the University is able to identify the sources of positive cases through contact tracing. The University has adequate space and resources to properly care for the positive cases and quarantined individuals. In Yellow, the University will implement enhanced deep cleaning protocols in appropriate on-campus spaces in order to mitigate any spread, per the community spread protocol. Students placed into quarantine or isolation or ordered to shelter in place will have their instruction moved to an online format until they are cleared to return to in-person instruction by Health Services. The additional deep cleaning protocols during this phase may also require the temporary moving of students, faculty, and staff from residence and/or office space. The amount of random testing will increase and become more focused during this phase. This may involve complete testing of the resident population, and/or increased testing of commuter students or faculty and staff, depending on the sources of the concern. Most activities remain allowed with appropriate protocols, although selected restrictions may be implemented based on any known concerns, such as violation of gathering limits.

ORANGE

- **Cases are More Common with Identifiable Clusters**
- **Campus Operations Remain Open**
- **Services and Gatherings Further Restricted**
- **Potential for Moving to Online Instruction**

This is the phase of the prior plan that required the most adjustment given the emerging science and changes in Commonwealth guidance over the last few months. Our prior experience and current guidance indicate that moving to online instruction under an Orange Alert may not be necessary or helpful to the health of the greater community. For example, students who may have been exposed went home in large numbers during both the week of online classes and the Berkshire Hall shelter in place in Spring 2021. A few of these students later tested positive after exposing family members.

In Orange, there is a larger number of known cases overall and two or more small definable clusters of cases. These may be small clusters in residence halls, on sports teams or student organizations, or multiple clusters in off-campus student housing. Importantly, Orange requires that the University remain confident that there is little if any spread that can be traced back to in-person instruction. The number of cases remains at a level that the University can continue to provide quarantine housing which minimizes shared bathroom use among quarantined students, while still isolating all known positive cases. As necessary within this level, the University has already taken steps to increase the number of quarantine and isolation beds, and has made contingency plans to acquire additional space should that become necessary. In this phase, the entire resident population of the campus will be tested at least weekly, and there will be another increase in the testing of faculty, staff, and commuter populations.

Orange now requires an intensification of Yellow protocols rather than a move to online instruction. Some non-essential faculty and staff may work remotely to ensure continuation of services should the situation become worse. In-person meetings may be restricted and social gathering rules adjusted in accordance to the time of year and the results of contact tracing. If cases are spreading from indoor activities, indoor gatherings will be further limited. If cases are spreading from the ignoring of masking and distancing rules outside, outside gatherings may be limited. If cases are spreading from known sanctioned University student activities, these activities will be limited or paused. Campus operations, including the residence halls and dining services will remain operational, but all food services will be offered in a "Grab 'n Go" format. Campus activities and support services will be available, but most may only offered in a remote format.

All students in quarantine, shelter in place, or isolation, both on- and off-campus, will continue to have the opportunity to receive their education online until they are cleared to return to in-person instruction by health services.

RED

Shutdown of the Campus

Criteria:

An Executive Order by the Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to shut down because existing data shows that it is not in best interest of public health to stay open OR the number of known cases on campus is so large and spread so extensive that consultation with Mass DPH indicates closing campus to be the only same responsible action.

Factors:

Western New England University will implement its Emergency Shutdown plan when internal and/or external analytics indicate that is in the best interest of the safety of our community to do so. We will also implement the plan in the event that we are required to do so by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

All on-ground classes and campus activities will cease within two hours of notification. Faculty, staff, and students are directed to immediately begin collecting belongings, including teaching and learning supplies, to support the closure of campus operations. Multiple closure alerts will be sent to community members via a RAVE alert and through all relevant electronic means (email, campus portal, website, social media). The plan will take 48 hours to be fully complete, with a majority of on-campus operations being closed within eight hours. The remaining shutdown tasks involve the completion of residential students collecting belongings and coordinating transportation home. Within 48 hours, resident students will be expected to have arranged a final pick-up or have secured a place to reside off campus. Students in quarantine or isolation halls will remain on campus for the duration of their required seclusion. Meals for remaining students will be boxed and delivered. After the initial 48 hours of closure, University-defined essential employees will remain the only employees able to access campus.

PLAN FOR THE CONTINUATION OF INSTRUCTION

It is important to note that if the Emergency Shutdown plan is implemented, all on-campus and hybrid courses will continue to be offered, but in an online format. There would be no return to in-person instruction for the remainder of the semester. The University has invested significantly in the training of our faculty and staff and in technology and infrastructure to ensure a consistent and high-quality remote learning experience that will meet all accreditation standards, and that any such instruction will be improved compared to the Spring 2020 shutdown. In addition, all student support services, which include but are not limited to, counseling, career, advising, tutoring, and mentoring services will continue to be offered in a virtual format, as will a wide variety of student activities designed to facilitate student connections.

Campus Shutdown Plan

DAY 1

All on-ground classes and campus activities will cease within two hours of notification. Faculty, staff, and students are directed to immediately begin collecting belongings, including teaching and learning supplies, to support the closure of campus operations. Multiple closure alerts will be sent to community members via a RAVE alert and through all relevant electronic means (email, campus portal, website, social media).

DAY 2

The plan will take 48 hours to complete, with a majority of on-campus operations being closed within eight hours. The remaining shutdown tasks include the coordination of residential students collecting belongings and moving off campus. Within 48 hours, resident students will be expected to have arranged a final pick-up or have secured a place to reside off campus.

DAY 3 AND BEYOND

Students in quarantine or isolation halls will remain on campus for the duration of their required seclusion. Meals for remaining students will be boxed and delivered. After the initial 48 hours of closure, University-defined essential employees will remain the only employees able to access campus.