We are thrilled that the entire Golden Bear community will be back in just a few short weeks for another successful academic year. Our goal remains to protect the health and safety of our community while promoting personal responsibility in making the right decisions to keep each other safe. WNE will continue to evaluate multiple factors to help inform our decisions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on campus, which include:

1) the level of community COVID-19 transmission, both on campus and in our surrounding community.

2) COVID-19 vaccination rates among WNE students, faculty, and staff;

3) results of our COVID-19 testing program, which will include a screening program with required participation from the unvaccinated campus population; and

4) any significant increases or decreases in COVID-19 cases on campus or off campus.

**COVID-19 Virus Transmission Levels**

**Community Levels**

We continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic, its impact, and the presence of the variants across the state of Massachusetts. A few important data points:

- Breakthrough infections, which is when people are infected after being fully vaccinated, have occurred in less than 0.18% of those vaccinated.

- Mortality rates in breakthrough infections remain exceptionally low at 0.002%.

**Campus Transmission**

WNE has tested for COVID-19 throughout the summer and has had zero (0) positive cases. We will continue to be transparent in reporting all testing outcomes and will use the website dashboard to communicate weekly testing results. It is everyone’s responsibility to regularly check the COVID-19 website to stay informed. A red banner will remain on the homepage which will take you to our [COVID-19 Information page](#).
Vaccination Updates

The data and science demonstrate that people who are fully vaccinated are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection. Our goal is to achieve "herd immunity" vaccination thresholds by August 30, 2021. We are well on our way to achieving this important milestone. A few important data points:

• **Over 70% of the campus** has submitted their vaccine information. This is excellent news and we ask for everyone who has not done so to send your proof of vaccination.
• Of those that have submitted their vaccine information, **93% are fully vaccinated**. This news is fantastic and demonstrates how committed we are to keeping our fellow Golden Bears safe.

Reminder of Important Deadlines:

• All faculty and staff must submit proof of vaccination or file for an exemption by **August 15, 2021**. This deadline is final.
• All students must submit proof of vaccination or file for an exemption by **August 23, 2021**. This deadline is final.
• Complete the vaccine requirement by sending your COVID-19 vaccine information to covidvac@wne.edu.
• Vaccine exemptions can be requested by using the following link https://forms.office.com/r/g3zvzHsD02.

Testing Program

• **Entry testing will begin on August 11** with the first group of early arrival students.
  • Reminder: non-vaccinated/exempted students need a negative PCR test before moving in. Health Services can assist in obtaining a test on move-in day, but you will need to quarantine until test results are received.
• **Surveillance testing** will start in September.
  • All non-vaccinated faculty, staff, and students will be tested weekly.
    ▪ Testing will take place on Mondays from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm in Health Services.
    ▪ If you miss your Monday testing cycle, Health Services will be offering a testing make-up day on Wednesdays from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm.
  • Consistent with CDC guidelines vaccinated community members will not be required to participate in weekly surveillance testing at this time.
• **Diagnostic testing** for COVID-19 is available in Health Services. Please call 413-782-1211 if you are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19. It is very important that community members regardless of vaccination status get tested as soon as any symptoms occur and report positive results to health services if you tested off campus.

Policy Changes

Mask Policy

Consistent with the MA DPH mask advisory published on July 30, 2021 ([MA DPH Mask Advisory 7.30.2021](https://forms.office.com/r/g3zvzHsD02)) and the CDC's recent guidance, WNE has revised and will be reinstating a Mask Policy, effective Monday, August 9, 2021.([Revised Mask Policy](https://forms.office.com/r/g3zvzHsD02) The Mask Policy will
extend into the first two weeks of the semester and may be lifted depending on current conditions.

**Mask Requirements**

**Outside:** Masking is not required when outside. Individuals may want to wear a mask outside and may do so at their discretion.

**Inside (general policy):** In an abundance of caution, masking inside buildings is required. This includes classrooms, laboratories, and residence hall common areas, and applies to vaccinated and unvaccinated students, faculty, staff and campus visitors.

**Inside (exceptions):** Exceptions will be made in the following circumstances:

- Individuals working alone in an enclosed space (an office, research lab, area with a door or dividers 5 feet tall or higher).
- Student residential rooms, (but not common areas).
- Meetings and small group work taking place in enclosed offices/conference rooms where all attendees are fully vaccinated be and close contact can be avoided.

Wearing masks serves two essential purposes - 1) to help keep ourselves safe from being exposed to virus particles by filtering the air we breathe and 2) help us from spreading particles to others that may carry the COVID-19/Delta variant virus.

Implementing this policy is the right decision, given that over the next few weeks we'll have community members arriving from many different states and countries. It is one of the periods of highest risk for the campus community and therefore calls upon all of us to act with an abundance of caution to keep each other safe.

We are confident that we will have another safe and successful year, which will include a rewarding and fun set of experiences inside and outside the classroom.

If you have questions or concerns about this weekly update contact Health Services at Healthservices@wne.edu or 413-782-1211.

Respectfully,

**Basil A. Stewart**
Vice President for Finance and Administration
Chair, Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT)

**Kathleen M. Noone**
Director, Health and Wellness