Hello, fellow Golden Bears. We hope everyone is beginning to settle into the new semester. As you are all aware, COVID-19 continues to impact the community, and it can at times feel overwhelming given this dynamic and ongoing fluid situation. It’s been amazing to witness firsthand the resilience of the campus community and the collective strength of all to forge ahead in our new normal. We will continue to need the Golden Bear community to adapt, modify and develop policies and processes to keep the campus healthy, safe, and strong.

Health Services will be conducting contact tracing on campus in conjunction with our Local Board of Health, and your support and assistance is needed. Contact tracing efforts are a proven tool in lowering transmission rates. Health Services conducts an extensive intake when a positive case is identified. Please answer the team’s questions honestly and as completely as you can.

What is Contact Tracing?
Contact tracing involves identifying people who have come into close contact (less than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) with someone diagnosed with COVID-19.

What is a Close Contact?
Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of a COVID-positive individual for 15 minutes or more over 24 hours. Examples of situations that might lead to close contact include, but are not limited to:

- Sharing an office space closer than 6 feet;
- Sitting together at a lab bench;
- Sitting next to each other in class wearing masks;
- Eating or sleeping together in a dorm room;
- Having an extended conversation at a party, while not wearing masks;
- Physical contact, such as hugging or kissing;
- Driving in a car together.
What is not close contact?
Incidental exposure to someone who is COVID-positive is generally low risk and not deemed a close contact. Examples of scenarios that would likely not lead to being a close contact include:

- Passing in the hallway;
- Working in the same building but not within 6 feet;
- Having a short conversation, wearing masks, and being more than 6 feet apart;
- Secondary contacts, i.e., close contacts of close contacts

What kinds of questions are asked during the intake process?
The list below is some of the types of questions the team will ask:

- When were you diagnosed with COVID-19? Do you have symptoms?
- When was the last time you were on-campus?
- Where have you been on campus recently?
- Where do you live? On-campus, at home? Do you have roommates?
- Have you had close contact with anyone during your infectious period?
  - The infectious period is the 48 hours (previous two days) preceding a positive test or symptom onset.
- Did you attend any meetings, gatherings, parties, or events with other WNE community members?

Policy Updates
The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Board of Health, the City of Springfield will implement a citywide mask mandate policy, regardless of vaccination status, effective Monday, September 13, 2021, and will remain in effect until November 1, 2021. Link: [Springfield Mask Mandate](#).

WNE EMRT team will review the new mandate and will release policy updates and guidelines to the campus community later this week.

COVID-19 Virus Transmission Levels
**Community Levels**
Hampden County Remains rated as HIGH for community-level COVID-19 transmission. Positivity Rate 5.23%.

**Campus Transmission**
WNE COVID-19 Fall 2021 Dashboard was released this past Friday, September 10, 2021. This data will be updated once a week, on Friday. The information on this Dashboard represents data from a 7-day period that begins every Thursday at 5:00 p.m. and ends the following Thursday at 4:59 p.m.

Link: [WNE Fall 2021 COVID-19 Dashboard](#)
Vaccination Updates
Great news on the vaccine front! The vaccines continue to demonstrate strong effectiveness at preventing serious illness and mortality. In Massachusetts, less than 0.53% of individuals have had a breakthrough case, and less than 0.02% of vaccinated people across the commonwealth have been hospitalized with COVID-19. The vaccines have proven to be highly effective at preventing mortality, with 0.004% of individuals dying once vaccinated. Source: Weekly MA Fully Vaccinated Case Report

Update Vaccine Clinic at WNE
Health Services will be offering a COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic (Moderna®) on Thursday Sept 23, 2021.

Location: Health Services, CSP Suite 325
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Pre-registration is required, using the link below. If interested, please complete the registration process by Friday Sept. 17, 2021.

Registration link: https://forms.office.com/r/mAFfL6cHFj

Update on Vaccine Boosters
The Massachusetts DPH Vaccine Unit is working with the Department of Health and Human Services to roll out a COVID-19 vaccine booster program. WNE has been in regular contact with the MA DPH Vaccine Unit and is actively preparing to support the entire Golden Bear community in gaining access to boosters once the plan for the state has been finalized. A few key points:

- We anticipate being able to offer access to each of the vaccines on campus. A campus-wide survey will be going out this week to gauge interest in booster shots as part of our planning efforts. Please respond to the survey when it comes out; your input is vital during the planning process.

Graduate Students-Important
Your term is scheduled to start on September 27. If you haven't already done so, you must submit proof of vaccination before the start of classes or you may be subject to administrative action. Please submit your proof of vaccination to covidvac@wne.edu

Surveillance Testing Important Update
Health Services will be expanding their hours to improve access to COVID-19 testing and general health care needs. Effective Monday, September 30, they will be open until 6:00 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays.
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, Center for Health & Wellness