Despite the changes caused by the pandemic, there are still the constants that our community relies on to signal that life goes on; the air gets crisper, the shadows get longer, and the seasons change—the circle of life continues.

These are facts that masks, vaccines, and social distancing, can’t change.

We are learning to live with COVID-19 and recognizing that our traditions, values, and normalcy are something we all crave, regardless of how we feel about mandates, restrictions, or vaccines.

The changing seasons also remind us of the upcoming campus traditions we are all looking forward to, such as Homecoming Weekend and Friends and Family Weekend. The tools in our COVID-19 toolbox are how we will navigate the pandemic, keeping each other safe while allowing us the ability to enjoy life’s constants and our time-honored traditions.

- We CAN participate and celebrate during Homecoming Weekend safely because we are a predominantly vaccinated campus and will wear masks indoors and outdoors.

- We CAN play sports, cheer each other on, and be together academically and socially because we are vaccinated, wearing masks, and practicing social distancing as needed.

- We CAN feel safe and know we can access our robust testing program if we are experiencing symptoms or we need to be tested due to possible exposure.

- We CAN care about members of the Golden Bear Community who are not vaccinated by using the COVID-19 tools we have at our disposal. Together we CAN maintain our guardrails against an evolving and changing virus.

**Policy Updates**
No new policy updates this week.

**COVID-19 Virus Transmission Levels**

**Community Levels**
Hampden county remains at a HIGH rating for COVID-19 transmission. However, the positivity rate has dropped to 4.64%, and over 64% of the county is now vaccinated.

Campus COVID-19 case numbers remain low, as well as the need for isolation and quarantine housing.

**Link:** [WNE Fall 2021 COVID-19 Dashboard](#)

*Figure 1 Source: CDC Data through Sept 20-Sept 26*
UPDATES on VACCINE BOOSTERS

CDC Booster Recommendations were posted on September 24. The summary of that posting is as follows:

The CDC recommends:

- People 65 years and older and residents in long-term care settings should receive a booster shot of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at least six months after their Pfizer primary series
- People aged 50–64 years with underlying medical conditions should receive a booster shot of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at least six months after their Pfizer primary series
- People aged 18–49 years with underlying medical conditions may receive a booster shot of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at least six months after their Pfizer primary series, based on their benefits and risks
- People aged 18-64 years who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting may receive a booster shot of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at least six months after their Pfizer primary series, based on their benefits and risks

Now that the guidelines are official, we will be working with the MA DPH Vaccine Unit to determine possible actions to gain access to booster shots for members of the WNE campus. Updates will be posted in next week’s newsletter.

Flu shots are now available for faculty, staff, and students!

Call Health Services and make an appointment today. Flu clinics and times will be posted next week.

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