Congratulations to the entire campus community on a successful Fall 2021 semester! This will be the last EMRT COVID-19 update of the semester. Weekly updates will resume the week of January 17, 2022 to assist the campus community with preparing for the spring semester.

The WNE COVID-19 dashboard will continue to be updated with all testing and outcome activity during the winter break; please check the website periodically. Weekly email reminders will not be sent out during that time but will resume the week of January 24, 2022.

During the winter break, should you test positive for COVID-19, please remember to notify Health Services at 413-782-1211 or healthservices@wne.edu.

**Variant Update (Omicron)**

There has been a lot of information in the news about the new Omicron variant and rising case counts across the state. Information that is not backed by science can cause anxiety and fear. What we know, whether it’s the Omicron or Delta variant, is that risk reduction consists of a layered approach centered around three core tactics, all of which are in place at WNE:

1. High vaccination rates and a robust booster program.
2. A masking policy, which offers protection against all variants.
3. A robust testing program to monitor transmission activity and rapidly detect and diagnose the virus when present.

WNE’s guiding principles throughout the pandemic have been to maintain the health and safety of the entire Golden Bear community and to base our decisions on science. Science indicates that Omicron can transmit easily. However, early reports still indicate illness severity is low.

Data released by the state Friday showed that about 71% of COVID hospitalizations in Massachusetts are people who are not fully vaccinated and that the three core tactics work.

**EMRT Update on COVID-19 Boosters**

Given the CDC’s recommendation on boosters, WNE announced in the December 13, 2021 weekly update that all faculty, staff, and students who intend to live, learn, conduct research, or access any campus resources must receive a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot when eligible. We communicated at that time that further details would be forthcoming.

WNE recognizes that individuals completed their primary vaccination series at different points in time. Therefore, the eligibility timeframe for booster shots will differ for everyone. No student, faculty, or staff will be denied access to the campus at the start of the spring semester.

The University will track booster compliance and reach out to faculty, staff, or students who are non-compliant and work with them to meet the COVID-19 booster requirement.
Students who remain out of compliance may have a hold placed on their account, which will prohibit them from registering for courses for the Fall 2022 semester and lead to disciplinary sanctions, including possible withdrawal from the University.

Faculty and staff who do not comply with the booster policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

Please read the full policy carefully; there is additional detailed information for the campus community.

Spring 2022 Booster Clinics at WNE

Health Services has carefully reviewed the science and the safety of the mix-and-match booster recommendations of the CDC (Interchangeability of Booster Shots). We are pleased to share that while WNE can only offer one type of vaccine during a clinic session for inventory management reasons, we can and WILL safely administer booster shots outside of an individual’s primary series. The new administration guidelines will assist the campus community in gaining timely access to booster shots throughout the spring semester.

Scheduling your booster shot is simple and easy to do; use the QR code provided to find a date and time that works for your schedule.

OR

Use the following link to schedule your booster:

Health Services will alert the campus via University Post if open slots are available on the day of the clinics for those preferring a walk-in appointment.

The Spring 2022 Booster Clinic Schedule has been updated and can be found on the COVID-19 website.

A note about Johnson and Johnson/Janssen Vaccine. Per the CDC, due to safety concerns, “In most situations, Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are preferred over the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine for primary and booster vaccination.” Please see the CDC Booster Recommendations for complete details.
WNE will continue to offer the J&J/Janssen vaccine to the campus community but encourage everyone to discuss their options with their healthcare provider if their primary series was the J&J/Janssen.

**Important Policy Update**

*Mask Policy*

We have received some questions about the mask policy and wanted to provide the campus community with a quick update.

WNE continues to track the COVID-19 activity of the surrounding communities in addition to our campus activity.

Massachusetts and most of the New England region are in the middle of a winter surge ([Interactive Dashboard of MA DPH](https://www.mass.gov/info-center/interactive-dashboard-of-ma-dph)). The Omicron variant is now currently the dominant variant, but Delta is also still present. We anticipate that case rates will remain high throughout the early winter months.

**Therefore, out of an abundance of caution, the WNE mask policy will remain in effect until further notice.** We believe this is the best decision for the health and safety of the entire campus community at this time.

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