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## Spring 2023 COVID-19 Plans

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Wed, Jan 18, 2023 at 11:14 AM

# CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

## Office of the Dean of Students

Dear Students,

As we prepare to launch the Spring 2023 semester, I'd like to share updates related to COVID-19. The COVID-19 planning group has been meeting to discuss Spring 2023 plans and, as always, we are consulting with Hartford HealthCare and our CT and NESCAC peers.

**Current COVID-19 Strain:** As we go into this next semester, we continue to have COVID-19, flu, and other respiratory illnesses in our midst. There is a new COVID-19 variant (XBB.1.5) that is an Omicron subvariant that is spreading across the United States. This is more transmissible than previous variants but, thus far this strain does not appear to cause more severe disease. Similar to other omicron variants it causes milder illness compared to Delta.

**Bivalent Booster:** The current bivalent booster is an important tool in helping to protect you against severe illness. As a result, if you have not yet been vaccinated with the bivalent booster the College highly recommends that you be vaccinated. The [CT Vaccine Portal](#) can be a valuable resource in identifying locations where you can access the bivalent booster.

**Pre-Arrival Testing:** It is highly recommended that you test for COVID-19 24 hours before arriving on campus. Before break, we made tests available to students. You can use one of these tests if you picked up a box before leaving or you can go to a local pharmacy to purchase a test kit. If your pre-arrival test is positive, you will need to delay your return to campus in order to recover from COVID. Please email a picture

of your positive test result to Dean Cardwell ([scardwel@conncoll.edu](mailto:scardwel@conncoll.edu)) and she will provide you with additional information regarding your return to campus.

**Mask Wearing When Ill:** Throughout the pandemic, masks have proven to be an important tool in helping to prevent spreading upper respiratory infections. As a result, if you have **any symptoms** that could be related to an upper respiratory infection (e.g. Flu, COVID) you should begin wearing a mask right away so that you don't spread the illness to others. You should test yourself for COVID and/or seek medical attention and refrain from attending classes, meetings, practice/rehearsal, etc.

**Mask Wearing When Not Ill:** If you are not ill but would like to protect yourself from catching a virus from others you may choose to wear a mask. In our discussions with Hartford HealthCare medical staff we learned that recent research on mask wearing shows that properly wearing an N95 or KN95 mask lowers the odds of infection by 83%. It is important to note that fit is important—if properly fitted, these masks should filter at least 95% of virus particles.

As we go into this semester, individuals who are not actively sick may choose to wear a mask. People's circumstances are different, and therefore, will lead to different choices in a variety of settings on whether to wear masks. As a result, it is important that our campus remain mask-friendly, as many individuals may choose to wear masks in a variety of different spaces. If you are meeting with a person who is wearing a mask, you may want to ask whether they would like you to also wear a mask—**always have a mask with you so that you are prepared to wear it if requested** to do so by another person or if you enter a person's office, room, or work space where they would prefer that a mask be worn. You may communicate to people entering your room or workspace that you would like them to wear a mask by posting this [sign](#).

In classes, meetings, workshops etc. the faculty, staff, or student facilitator may require to have the group of participants mask. If a participant would like to request that the group wear a mask they should meet with the facilitator so that they can discuss the request.

Beyond these circumstances masks are required in Warnshuis waiting area for Student Health Services and Student Counseling Services and in Student Health Services exam rooms.

**Mask Availability:** KN95 masks are available in Student Health Services, Office of Student Life (Cro 218), Human Resources, Dean of the Faculty Office, Unity House, Harris Dining Hall and Shain Library Circulation Desk.

**Test Availability:** We have a limited number of tests available that are intended for faculty, staff, and students to use when symptomatic or on Day 5 from close contact with a person confirmed to have COVID-19. These tests are available for students in Student Health Services and in the Student Life Office (Cro 218). These tests are not

to be used for travel or other personal reasons. Rapid antigen tests are also available at local stores and you can also order up to four free test kits through the federal government's website - [covidtests.gov](https://www.covidtests.gov)

**Testing Positive for COVID-19:** If you test positive for COVID-19, you are expected to notify the College by sending a picture of your positive test result to [covidresults@conncoll.edu](mailto:covidresults@conncoll.edu) and immediately begin to follow the protocols that will be outlined in an email you will receive as an automatic reply to your message. Below is a summary of the campus protocol.

- Your recovery period is 5 to 10 days (Day 0 is the day you tested positive). The recovery period can end before 10 days if you test negative with a single rapid antigen test between Day 5 and Day 10. Please send a picture of your negative test result to [covidresults@conncoll.edu](mailto:covidresults@conncoll.edu). Once you submit the picture your recovery period is complete—you do not need to wait for a response from Student Life staff. If you complete the recovery period before 10 days, you should continue to take precautions (e.g., wear a well-fitting mask around other people) until Day 10.
- Students who can travel home in a private vehicle without using public transportation are encouraged to recover at home and to return to campus after a single negative test as described above.
- Students who can not travel home will recover in their room (in singles and multi-occupancy rooms) which is consistent with how we support students with other illnesses. Students may only leave their room to secure grab-n-go meals from the dining hall, to access bathrooms and medical care, and to be outside. Students must not go to classes, meetings, or participate in co-curricular programs while recovering.
- Students recovering in their room may use the bathroom on their floor, and are expected to wear a KN95 mask in the bathroom unless engaged in self-care that requires them to take off the mask momentarily (e.g., brushing teeth, showering, shaving).
- Students with COVID-19 may enter the dining hall to select their own food but may not eat in the dining hall. Students must use hand sanitizer before entering the dining hall and wear KN95 masks while in the space selecting their food.
- There are a limited number of dedicated recovery rooms on campus and these spaces, if available, will be used for students who cannot go home and have roommate(s) with extenuating circumstances that require the student with COVID-19 to recover outside of their room. Students in this circumstance should call Campus Safety and request to speak with the Student Life staff member who is on-call.
- Students should be in contact with Student Health Services if you have any concerns during your recovery period ([shs@conncoll.edu](mailto:shs@conncoll.edu), 860-429-2275). If after-hours please contact Campus Safety (860-439-2222).
- It is recommended that you notify people who you identify as being a close contact. A person is considered a close contact if they have been within six feet of you for 15 minutes or more during what is considered the infectious period, which is 48 hours prior to positive diagnosis or onset of symptoms.

**If Identified as a Close Contact:** You may hear directly from a person with COVID-19 that they tested positive and that you are a close contact. Close contacts should test with a rapid antigen test on Day 5 from their last contact with the positive person and

should test if they begin to experience symptoms at any time within 14 days of the close contact. Close contacts are also expected to consistently wear a mask and should watch symptoms for 10 days from their last close contact with the positive person.

**Visitors to Campus:** All campus buildings are open to visitors and full-capacity attendance is permitted indoors for events and other gatherings. Proof of vaccination or testing is not required for visitors though it is recommended that visitors be vaccinated for COVID-19 (initial two dose series and booster). The College asks that all visitors perform a self-screening for COVID-19 symptoms. If a visitor has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 they should take a rapid antigen (at-home/over the counter) test before coming to campus. If the test is positive they should not come to campus and if it is negative they are welcome to come to campus but, given the symptoms, should wear a KN95 mask or the equivalent.

What seems clear is that COVID-19, with its many variants, will be with us for the foreseeable future. The good news is that the virus, while more communicable, causes less severe symptoms for those who are fully vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and there are also effective drugs available to treat those who become infected. As noted earlier, a well-fitting KN95 mask or the equivalent provides protection from the virus even when others are not masked.

Our plans for this spring continue to move us closer to more typical operations on our campus and with tools available to respond to COVID-19 as needed. As noted at the start of the year, we have all recognized, the past three years have contributed to greater isolation which has been challenging for all of us and, in particular, students as you pursue your college education. It is therefore critical for us to not only be focused on physical health but also mental health. One of the many strategies that we are implementing in addressing this area of concern is to return to an as close to normal Connecticut College education and overall experience as possible.

As we know, circumstances can change, and we will adjust, if necessary, but we anticipate these plans will guide us through the coming spring semester. We will continue to communicate with the campus as necessary and the [Path Forward](#) COVID-19 website will have updated information for the start of the semester.

Thank you and I wish you the very best as you begin this spring semester.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Victor Arcelus', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Victor Arcelus  
Dean of Students

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