

Welcome back!

I hope everyone had a peaceful and restful break.

As we kick off a new semester and look forward to entering a new year together, I wanted to take a moment to share some COVID-19 updates and other health related information. Flu, COVID, and RSV (Respiratory syncytial virus, a common, contagious virus that causes infections of the respiratory tract) cases are increasing in Berkshire County. Please remember the following points:

Similar to the fall, we continue to make antigen tests and masks available at locations across campus for pickup by all members of our community. Like supply distribution practices throughout the pandemic, they are available in academic offices (with department administrative assistants) and administrative office locations across campus.

Antigen tests

Rapid antigen tests are effective for symptomatic testing, and effective with the latest variants. We are currently supplied with iHealth tests on campus. You may notice that some kits are past the printed expiration date, these have been [extended](#) and are still effective. We appreciate everyone's efforts not to waste tests.

Masks

Masks remain optional around campus with the following exceptions:

- Masks are required in the MountainOne Wellness Center (Health and Counseling Services), as required by MA state law.
- Faculty have the option of requesting that masks be worn in their classrooms.
- Staff and faculty also have the option of requesting that masks be worn in their individual office spaces, as posted.

If an office or faculty member asks that you wear a mask, please respect and support their request. Mask wearing continues to be our most successful tool in preventing the spread of germs, especially during flu season. Both disposable-surgical and N95 masks are available for anyone in need in offices across campus. We encourage people to wear masks if they choose and recommend that you always have one with you. Please continue to be respectful of each other's choices around masking.

Positive COVID-19 Case Reporting

We continue to follow [CDC](#) and [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#) isolation and quarantine guidance for COVID-19 cases. If you are showing symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, contact Health Services ASAP. If Health Services asks you to isolate, please follow their guidance. If you are going to miss classes due to illness, please submit an excused absence form and contact your faculty directly to develop a plan for completing any work you miss. The form can be found under *Student Academics* on the portal.

Current CDC guidance for people who are vaccinated and boosted who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 is that they do not need to quarantine if they are symptom free.

FLU

We are seeing an uptick in the Flu across Berkshire County. If you missed the two flu vaccine clinics that were held on campus you can obtain a vaccine at most pharmacies. To locate the pharmacy closest to you, enter your zip code in the [Flu Vaccine Finder](#). Remember to bring your insurance card with you, since most insurance companies cover the cost of the vaccine.

Ways to prevent the transmission of influenza

- Obtain the seasonal flu vaccine.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper arm.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 15–20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

What to expect if you contract the flu:

Flu symptoms may include

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Some people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

If you experience any of these symptoms or have any questions, please call 413-662-5421 to speak with a provider or to schedule an appointment. Health Services is located on the ground floor of MountainOne Student Wellness Center, the entrance is across from CSI.

For more information regarding the Flu, consult the [CDC's website](#).

As always, COVID remains a dynamic situation. The college continues to monitor local and national data and guidance around COVID and Flu and updates its guidelines as information from public health officials and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts evolves.

We appreciate your continued efforts in keeping our community healthy and protected.

Good luck with the start of your semester.

Patrick

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“National Top Ten Public Liberal Arts College”

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"Let go of who you think you should be in order
to be who you are" Brene Brown