

Oct. 29, 2021

Faculty, Staff and Students,

Effective Monday, November 1, 2021, the college will be transitioning to ORC Level A-1.

Since classes resumed, the college has met the internal metrics necessary (high vaccination rate, low on campus transmission) to transition but limited by incidence rates in Clay County and the Kansas City metro. For the period of October 20 to October 26, new cases in Clay County dropped to 111 with a positivity rate of 6.8%. These numbers are consistent with those experienced in early July, and the county transmission status is likely to downgrade from Red once below 100 new cases (per county dashboard criteria).

In addition to area caseloads, the recent recommendation approving the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children ages 5-12 will drive new cases down further. The combination of high on campus vaccination, new data on natural immunity, low(er) on campus and community incidence rates, and a newly eligible population to inoculate, provides confidence that the College can now transition within the ORC framework.

What changes?

There are two significant differences between Level A-2 and Level A-1 and the published guidance has been updated to clarify the following:

1. **Facial coverings are no longer required on campus for vaccinated OR unvaccinated individuals.** Faculty who established a facial covering requirement in their course syllabus and staff members who have facial covering requirements in their personal offices, may continue with a facial covering policy for those settings. However, facial coverings will not be required for entrance to a facility or communal area by unvaccinated individuals. The College reserves the right to temporarily require facial coverings for certain events/venues and will post notice prior to the event and at the time of entry.
2. **Quarantine protocols for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals will be aligned.** Currently, vaccinated individuals who are notified as a close contact, must wear a facial covering for 14 days and test between days 3 and 5. Unvaccinated individuals were instructed to quarantine to a close contact. During Level A-1, unvaccinated individuals will not immediately quarantine (unless becoming symptomatic), and like vaccinated individuals, will wear a facial covering for 14 days and take a COVID test between days 3-5 AND again at day 7 or 8 when identified as a close contact.

Changes to the facial covering policy reflect what occurs outside the Kansas City limits. Facial coverings will continue to be encouraged by any who choose to wear them, and in the case of close contacts, MUST be worn for a period of 14 days following known contact.

Changes to the quarantine protocol are a result of observed impact. For this academic year to date, only one positive case has been connected to a contact traced case on campus. Quarantine has had a substantial impact to classroom learning, for both the student placed in quarantine and the faculty who must make necessary accommodations for those students.

Note: Isolation protocols do not change - all positive test results MUST isolate regardless of vaccination status.

The exposure matrix has been revised to distinguish between levels, with Level A-1 attached for reference.

If on-campus cases increase substantially and/or an increase in community transmission exists due to an existing or future variant, the college will transition within the framework to initiate the proper response and mitigation strategies within our community.

Thank you for helping keep the Jewell community safe.

Daniel Holt
Associate Vice President for Institutional Strategy