

Jan. 6, 2022

Faculty, Staff and Students,

The Mobilization and Operational Planning Teams have reviewed the available data related to the rise in Omicron variant infections across the country and in Clay County. The good news is that the Omicron variant is proving to be much less of a threat to vaccinated individuals than first was feared, and while breakthrough cases are happening at a relatively high rate, cases are extremely mild, and often asymptomatic, which bodes well for a productive start to our spring semester.

With that said, we know that Omicron is highly contagious and is spreading. It likely will run its course early in the semester—but for the safety of our community we will transition back to Level A2 effective immediately. This means that we will wear masks while indoors (with the usual exceptions in living quarters, while eating, and during physical activity) through January 30, at which time we will reassess. We also are requiring booster shots for all eligible employees and students, and we will be offering a clinic on January 25 for anyone who wishes to complete their booster vaccination on site.

Please see [our protocols](#) for specific information on how to submit proof of your booster vaccination to Human Resources (for employees) and the Health Center (for students). Please also note that the OSHA recommendations, which require unvaccinated employees and student workers to test weekly, will go into effect in the coming weeks. We will provide more information on these regulations as it becomes available.

Finally, the College is aligning with the CDC's guidance on isolation of positive cases with and without symptoms, which will alter our previous practice of isolating for ten days and ameliorate disruptions to learning and cocurricular activity. At my direction, we also are suspending formal contract tracing through RapidTrace. We have entered a phase of the pandemic wherein our previous, more formal measures around contact tracing are neither as needed nor as effective as they were when we did not have a 90% vaccination rate. All members of the Jewell community are urged to monitor symptoms, access one of our many test sites when symptomatic, and follow the guidance on isolation and communication if positive for Covid.

All of us are navigating the constant shifts in the virus and its impact on society. I am grateful for your collaboration, engagement, and flexibility as we continue to assess our situation and enact the best possible strategies for keeping our campus safe. I encourage you to study the attached guidance carefully, and I welcome your thoughts and questions. In the meantime, thank you for continuing to exemplify our Core Values of Courageous Citizenship and Authentic Engagement as we embrace a new semester—and new opportunities for living and learning—at Jewell.

Elizabeth MacLeod Walls, Ph.D.
President