

**From:** President Larry Stimpert  
**To:** Students, Parents, Faculty, and Staff of Hampden-Sydney College  
**Re:** Spring Semester 2022 Reopening / COVID-19 Mitigation Plans

January 11, 2022

Last week, our students received important information about the start of the spring semester from Dean of Students Richard Pantele, and faculty and staff members also received another important update from Mike McDermott, our Dean of Faculty and College COVID coordinator. Now, with less than a week before the start of the semester, I'm writing to share additional important details about our COVID mitigation strategy and to underscore information that has been previously shared with all.

The highly transmissible Omicron variant is a new chapter in the COVID-19 saga. Even though it appears that the threat of serious illness, hospitalization, and death posed by Omicron is lower than the original or Delta variants—especially among the vaccinated—we can all understand how widespread infection could jeopardize our ability to offer an on-campus, in-person educational experience. Coming at a time when all of us want to put COVID behind us, Omicron is spreading rapidly and we share a collective responsibility to remain vigilant to protect the health and wellbeing of all members of our campus community.

**Testing:** According to the CDC, individuals with an Omicron infection can spread the virus to others, even if they are vaccinated or don't have symptoms. Colleges that have already had students return to campus are seeing high positivity rates, and we know of at least a couple of colleges in Virginia that have decided to hold virtual-only classes for the first couple of weeks. To give our community the best opportunity to continue offering in-person instruction, we need to do everything we can to minimize the presence of the Omicron variant on our campus. Accordingly, **the College is requiring all students to submit a negative COVID-19 test before returning to campus. Tests must be administered within 24 hours of your return on Sunday, January 16 and results uploaded to [this portal](#).** Students with a positive test result should email the Hampden-Sydney Care Team at [careteam@hsc.edu](mailto:careteam@hsc.edu). A College staff member will respond offering support and next steps.

The College will accept a lab test, a rapid test from a provider such as a pharmacy, or an at-home test. A photo of the test results can be uploaded to the portal. If you are using an at-home test, please print your name and date on the test, take a photo of the negative result, and upload it through the portal.

The only exception for a negative pre-return test is for students who have tested positive in the past 90 days. Students in this situation should contact the Student Health Center at (434) 223-6167.

(For students pre-approved for an early return, test results must be uploaded to the portal 24 hours before the approved return time. The College will not accept any additional early arrival requests. Unless approved to return early, no student may move back to campus until Sunday, January 16th. Contact Patty Townsend in the Office of Student Affairs at [ptownsend@hsc.edu](mailto:ptownsend@hsc.edu) with any questions about an early return.)

**Students who cannot obtain a test will be tested immediately upon their return to campus—prior to returning to their living unit or any other campus facility. If you cannot obtain a test, contact Kim Ball in the Student Health Center at (434) 223-6167 to schedule an on-campus test.**

**Students and faculty and staff members should not come to campus if you have a positive test result, are experiencing [COVID-like symptoms](#), or if you have been a close contact to anyone who has recently received a positive COVID test result.**

**Wastewater Testing:** Wastewater testing will continue to be an essential element of the College's COVID mitigation strategy. Wastewater testing will resume immediately after students return and provide a reliable indicator of the presence of the virus, which will also help to inform future testing.

**Testing of Unvaccinated Students and Employees:** The previous testing protocol—weekly testing for non-vaccinated individuals—will continue for the duration of the semester or until the pandemic has abated.

**Isolation/Quarantine:** The College will continue to follow [CDC guidance on quarantine and isolation periods](#), as communicated last week by Richard Pantele, Dean of Students. For positive cases, this means isolating for five days, followed by masking for another five days (assuming that no symptoms remain). Any student who has been released from quarantine or isolation must mask when around other people (including roommates) for five days after his release. General masking policies apply after that period.

**Temporary Restriction on Visitors and Group Gatherings:** As an additional precaution and to give ourselves the best opportunity to continue to offer in-person instruction, students may not host visitors or hold group gatherings where masking and social distancing cannot be ensured for the first two weeks of the semester. We will reevaluate these restrictions before the end of January.

**Heightened Mask Protocols:** Until further notice, masks are required inside all campus buildings, TigeRec, and indoor athletic events (this includes basketball games). Masks should be, at a minimum, multi-layered (preferably surgical-grade or better), and must be worn correctly to cover the nose and mouth completely. The College will have a supply of masks for students who may need them. Individuals are exempt from wearing masks when actively eating or drinking in the Commons or Tiger Inn, or when in private spaces, such as a dorm room or personal office. (Note that individuals released from quarantine or isolation have additional masking requirements for five days after release.)

**Mask Accountability:** The entire campus community should feel empowered to enforce masking where appropriate. We especially need students to hold their brothers accountable for the health and safety of every member of our campus community. **Students who do not comply with masking protocol will be held accountable through the Code of Student Conduct for failure to comply with College policy.**

**Flexibility/Hybrid Classes:** Faculty members are encouraged to be flexible and prepare for hybrid classes, especially at the beginning of the semester, given the possibility that many students could be in quarantine or isolation.

**Employee Sick Leave/COVID Leave:** Current leave and quarantine policies are provided under the “For Employees” section on the College’s [COVID-19 web page](#).

**Vaccination Clinic:** The College is working with the Virginia Department of Health to schedule an on-campus vaccination clinic and details will be shared as soon as they are available. Vaccinations and booster shots are also readily available in most pharmacies.

**According to the CDC, vaccines may not keep you from getting the Omicron variant but they are proving “highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death.” For this reason, we urge all eligible community members to consult with their medical provider about the benefits of the vaccine and booster shots.**

I understand that the Omicron variant has emerged at a time when most of us are more than ready to put COVID behind us, but its easy transmission means that we must approach the start of the spring semester with caution. My hope is that starting the semester with vigilance will pay off for our community by allowing us to offer, as we have for 18 months now, an on-campus, in-person educational experience. Thank you for your cooperation and willingness to put the interests of our campus community ahead of your personal convenience and preferences.



**Larry Stimpert**

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