



TO: Eastern Faculty, Staff and Students, Parents and Visitors

FROM: Dr. Thomas Striplin, President

DATE: January 5, 2022

SUBJECT: IMPORTANT: Revised COVID Protocols

Over the next eight weeks, we will be implementing revised campus COVID protocols due to the large surge in the transmission of the virus associated with the Omicron variant. Next week, we will have some Zoom sessions to allow faculty/staff to express any concerns. I want to assure you that our number one concern is the safety of all employees, students and visitors while on our Main Campus, the Technology Center and New Biz Launchpad. Every employee needs to be vigilant during the next eight weeks and take the virus surge very seriously. We have an obligation to do the best we can to limit the spread of the virus while still trying to provide our educational services. I have contacted every community college president in West Virginia and they are all trying to navigate this challenging situation.

In consultation with cabinet members yesterday who were on campus, through guidance at the state level, and with the help of other community college presidents, we are establishing the following protocols for the next eight weeks. If you have particular concerns that you need to address with me right away, please don't hesitate to contact me.

1. All faculty and staff **present on the Main Campus, the Technology Center, or New Biz Launchpad** will need to be tested for Covid. The state has issued us rapid Covid antigen tests, which we plan on administering on-site here at the Main Campus, or you can take the kit, self-test, and report the results back to us. [Here is an online video](#) that shows you how to perform the test. I have created an online reporting form that you will complete once you have your test results. We will send out more information on where we will be testing on campus and how you can pick up a kit if you plan to test at home. Our goal is to start testing employees on Monday, January 10, 2022. View the form [here](#).
2. We will be encouraging all students coming to campus to get tested **before** classes start on January 18. Requiring testing of all students creates a complex issue, and we have limited resources and staff to administer this. Many of our courses are online, which helps reduce the number of students coming to campus weekly.



I am also asking for increased vigilance in reminding students regularly via email or while on campus that if they have **any symptoms**, they are not to come to class, or if they have been exposed to any person with known COVID, they should get tested before coming to class. Students are not to be penalized in any way if they are unable to come to class due to a covid situation. Faculty will work with these students to ensure coursework is completed until the student can return to class.

3. I am asking that all employees be very vigilant. If you are experiencing **any symptoms** or have been around a person who has COVID or has a high potential for exposure, you should remain home and get tested before coming to campus. **I am also allowing for increased telework during this period of time beyond our one-day current policy.** Please work with your supervisor. We also have to be more vigilant with mask-wearing on campus, and if students violate that policy, we need to let them know that they must wear their masks and social distance as much as possible. Any students found repeatedly violating the policy will be subject to disciplinary action.
4. Some faculty members who have a scheduled face-to-face class on campus may have a higher level of concern due to an increased risk of exposure to students in the classroom. I have informed Curtis that faculty who are uncomfortable can work with their students and poll them and see if they would be willing to have the class online for the next six to eight weeks. Another option is that if some face-to-face students insist on coming to campus, the faculty member could flex the class and stream it live, having fewer students present while others are streaming live online. We must be flexible during this period of time.

We are doing our best to provide safety while attempting to limit the level of disruption to campus operations and student learning. I do believe that the surge will decrease within the next eight weeks as the exposure numbers skyrocket. If the metrics change, we may have to revise our plans, and we will continue to monitor and work with the Health Department and State Officials on the best way to proceed.

If you have not been fully vaccinated and boosted, I cannot stress the importance of getting the vaccine. 90% of the patients in intensive care units in West Virginia are unvaccinated.

Stay safe everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas C. Striplin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Thomas Striplin