

Dear QU Community:

We hope you have been enjoying your summer, despite the heat wave affecting so many of us in the Midwest. Stay cool, Hawks, and pay attention to those heat advisories.

This message is the ninetieth update on Quincy University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is **important new and time-sensitive information in this message**, so we will start by giving you some context for what you will read below.

On Tuesday, July 27, the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** announced new guidance for those who have been fully vaccinated for COVID-19. Previously, on May 14, QU had followed CDC guidance and lifted masking obligations on campus for those who had been fully vaccinated.

As of this week, the CDC is recommending that any fully vaccinated individual should wear facemasks in public indoor spaces in those parts of the country with substantial or high transmission risks. The goal for doing so is to slow down the spread of the much more infectious "Delta variant" of the COVID-19 virus. The Delta variant primarily affects unvaccinated people, but some vaccinated people can be infected by the Delta variant and pass it on to others. For this reason, the federal government now wants vaccinated and unvaccinated people to wear facemasks when their parts of the country are at risk.

For the moment, **Adams County, Illinois, and the surrounding counties in Illinois and Missouri are at substantial or high risk for COVID-19 transmission**. Further, the State of Illinois has adopted the new CDC guidance on vaccinated people wearing facemasks. We hope the situation in our region will quickly improve. Regrettably, and for now, **the CDC guidance applies to us in Quincy and Adams County**.

We at Quincy University have been studying this new guidance from the CDC since it was announced on Tuesday, and further review of this guidance is needed to make sure the university makes fully informed decisions that align with the available science and do not pose unreasonable burdens on our community. At the same time, we are aware that COVID-19 is dangerous and is continuing to pose the threat of serious illness or death in our region.

This updated guidance from the CDC was unexpected and disappointing for many of us, especially those who have been fully vaccinated. Nevertheless, we at QU need to respond to this guidance and work together for the good of the university and all our friends, family, and neighbors.

Here's our present situation at QU, which **we fully expect to update** in the next week as we receive new information:

- **Effective from Friday, July 30, and until Saturday, August 7, 2021, facemasks on the Quincy University campus for those who are fully vaccinated are strongly recommended in indoor public settings.** Members of the QU administration already have committed to wearing masks in all indoor public settings during this eight-day period. Reasonable exceptions for eating and drinking should be made by those wearing masks, of course. Those who work in private spaces are welcome to take off masks when alone. **This recommendation only applies until August 7** and will be replaced by new QU policies and procedures for COVID-19, which we will announce next week and which will take effect on August 8.
- **Those who have not been vaccinated already are expected to wear masks in indoor public settings at QU.** This continues to be our expectation.
- Physical distancing has not been featured as a priority in recent guidance from the CDC, but the practice of physical distancing can be helpful in preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- Facemasks are not required or expected when outdoors on the QU campus, whether you are vaccinated or not.
- Any member of our community, including guests, are welcome to wear facemasks at any time and in any place on campus.
- **In the event a member of the community attends an indoor meeting on campus with other people, it is an appropriate courtesy to wear a mask and to practice physical distancing while participating in that meeting.** Again, masks need not be worn when a person is alone in a private office.
- **Additional COVID-19 guidance related to the QU campus will be announced in the coming week.** Please be patient with us as we work to review many new or newly revised sources of information related to our campus COVID-19 policies and procedures, including information provided by the NCAA, by several professional and medical organizations, and by the federal, state, and local governments. Not surprisingly, our policies and procedures will cover the details relevant to the start of the Fall 2021 academic

terms, including procedures to be used in classrooms, laboratories, outdoor spaces, and residence halls.

- QU continues to **very strongly encourage COVID-19 vaccination** for all eligible members of the Quincy University community. While no vaccine is perfect, COVID-19 vaccinations are very safe and highly effective. COVID-19 vaccinations also are very good at protecting people against the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus. When you are fully vaccinated, you are protecting yourself and your loved ones.
- As previously announced, **QU does NOT presently require COVID-19 vaccination** for students, faculty or staff, but **vaccination is strongly encouraged**. New and returning students have received information about coming to campus for the 2021 Fall terms and their need to provide either proof of vaccination or recent, negative COVID-19 test results in order to begin any academic term with instruction occurring on campus. A change in Illinois law, a more severe COVID-19 outbreak, or new guidance from the Catholic Church might lead us to revise QU's vaccination policy.

At the moment, the **most important thing** any member of the QU community can do to beat COVID-19 and help our campus fully return to normal is to **be vaccinated**. While masks can be useful and helpful in preventing COVID-19 infections – ample scientific evidence supports masking – vaccination is our single most powerful weapon against the virus. Science matters, and vaccines are the reason that Fall 2021 will be very different from Fall 2020.

We hope that our COVID-19 situation improves so much over the next few weeks that Dr. McGee will have the time to focus on National Waffle Day (August 24) and the glorious 600-year history of the waffle as the very best of breakfast foods. Like most of you, we would much rather talk about waffles than COVID-19.

If you are new to QU and are not aware of Dr. McGee's affection for waffles, you should expect he will return to this topic.

You will hear much more from us next week about COVID-19 policies and procedures, Hawks. Until then, be well and stay safe.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian McGee, President

Dr. Christine Tracy, Vice President for Student Development