



DEFIANCE COLLEGE

SPRING 2021: COVID-19 TESTING PROTOCOL CHANGES

Today, I am providing some updates to our COVID-19 protocols for the Spring Semester. As you know from communications in the last month, we are now requiring all students to test weekly. We are facing very different circumstances this semester than we did at the start of the Fall semester. Community spread is high across the country including Defiance County whereas it was quite minimal in Defiance County in August 2020. The new variants of the virus appear to be more contagious and we want to be proactive to contain its quick spread. Vaccine availability for healthy college students as well as the majority of our employees is likely months away. We are prepared to continually adjust our protocols to meet the needs of our current situation and the ever changing information on best practices for college campuses and COVID-19. The current situation results in some changes to our testing protocols for the semester. We anticipate this to be adjusted periodically, so we urge you to read updates as they are provided.

As a reminder, we use two guiding principles when making decisions: 1) the health and safety of our campus community, and 2) providing an in-person educational experience which includes both face-to-face classes and athletics. We look to many sources for guidance on how to develop our policies and procedures including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Defiance County Health Department, NCAA, and the American College Health Association (ACHA). Though the CDC provides the core guidance for the framework of our COVID-19 policies and procedures, their guidance is basic. Our guidance is more robust in order to maintain safety on our campus, especially in a residential living environment. Regular review of these sources of guidance by the COVID-19 team established in March 2020 at the onset of the pandemic, has led to our decision to test all students weekly on Wednesdays.

The CDC indicates that most people who have had COVID-19 seem to have an immunity to reinfection by it for about 90 days. During this 90 day timespan, we will continue to monitor and test students. Because they are no longer contagious, students typically test negative during that period. If they would test positive during the 90 day period, it indicates that they are shedding the COVID virus but it can't be determined if they are shedding dead virus from their previous infection (not contagious to those around them) or new, live virus from a new infection (contagious). While consulting with the Health Department about these issues, they indicated that if individuals test positive again during that 90 day period, decisions about whether or not to isolate are made on a case by case basis. After examining best practice evidence and after consultation with the Defiance County Health Department, we have developed the following protocols for how to address students who test positive for COVID-19 within 90 days of a previous infection. The following factors are considered.

- **Within the first 60 days**, students with positive test results will be assessed to determine if the results are an indication that they are shedding dead virus from their previous infection or new, live virus from a new infection as stated previously. We will follow the guidance from the CDC and consult the Defiance County Health Department as needed when determining the need to isolate a student with a positive result and the quarantining of close contacts.

- **After 60 days** (the last 30 of 90 days), we will consider the presence of symptoms, in addition to other types of information, like close contact to other recently positive individuals.
- **As the window of 90 days advances**, we will become increasingly conservative when making decisions about when to isolate. Again this will be done in consultation with the Health Department. We have already had some incidents of students or employees experiencing a second infection with symptoms in less than 90 days.
- **After 90 days**, students who test positive tests will be put in isolation as it will be considered a new infection; all close contacts will be quarantined.

Depending on the time of day, if consultation with the health department or other entities is needed, for the safety of the campus community, we may have to temporarily isolate or quarantine individuals while a determination regarding further isolation and/or quarantine is made. We want to have as few people in isolation and quarantine as possible while also ensuring the safety of our campus.

Please email covid19@defiance.edu for any questions related to Covid-19 policies and protocols.

We know this is a difficult situation and it is almost a year that we have been working together to keep students, faculty, and staff as healthy as possible during a pandemic. I sincerely thank you for your cooperation as we all work together to continue to keep our campus safe and healthy. It isn't easy and it is important!

Dean Marsalek