

**SPECIAL BULLETIN: COVID Policy Changes**  
**09.09.2021**

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Dear Faculty and Staff,

Peace and Blessing.

There are no words to adequately express how tired and frustrated we all are with COVID.

However, COVID is not merely a thing of the past, and this has become more evident over the last week. As a University, we have had over 100 people test positive for the COVID virus in the last seven days. The University community is already feeling the impact of these circumstances with many students, faculty, and staff now in isolation and quarantine and missing class as well as other University activities.

The current trajectory of COVID infections on campus is not sustainable. We are running out of adequate isolation/quarantine space. Those individuals tasked with testing, tracing, and facilitating quarantine on campus are being heavily taxed and struggling to keep up with the demands being put on them. Faculty and staff with underlying risks are becoming increasingly concerned about their safety in the workspace.

To be clear, Franciscan University is not the only college or university experiencing a spike in COVID. Many other institutions throughout the country are experiencing an increase. Locally, EGCC has moved totally online; so has the University of Dallas. We do not want to take that route.

As we have learned, nothing we do will guarantee that no one will contract COVID, but we do need to take more cautionary steps to try to mitigate some of the spread. We cannot continue with the number of positive cases we have seen in recent days.

What gives us additional concern is that about 25 percent of the recent positive cases are “breakthrough infections” of those who were vaccinated. We also have evidence now of re-infection on campus of some who previously had COVID.

Given these circumstances, for the next two weeks, the University will require students, faculty, and staff to wear masks in classrooms, chapels, and in facilities in which six feet of distance cannot be consistently maintained. Masks are not required when exercising or eating indoors. These changes will become effective Friday morning at 6:00 a.m.

Quarantines and Isolations: Faculty must accommodate students who are in documented quarantine or isolation, which should be considered excused absences. (You can contact Virginia Garrison, [vgarrison@franciscan.edu](mailto:vgarrison@franciscan.edu), if confirmation is not provided and is desired.) The easiest way to accommodate your students is to record all your classes in VidGrid and link them in Blackboard. If you wish to grant access to the videos only to students with documented quarantines or isolations, you can create a separate folder in Blackboard and only allow specific students access for limited periods of time. Ultimately, faculty may decide to offer any reasonable accommodation that is consistent with their treatment of other excused absences. If you have doubts as to what may be reasonable, please consult your department chair or school dean.

In the end, we need to work together so we can have as normal a semester as possible. We are certain no one wants to take these steps, but we believe they are necessary to increase the likelihood that we will have a normal semester in terms of professors being in class rather than in isolation, athletes and teams being able to compete, and students being able to take part in clinicals. We will continually monitor the situation to see if the steps we are now implementing will help lower our numbers. If they do, we will adjust accordingly.

If these steps help us deal with the increased numbers and preserve our ability to continue on-campus instruction and student activities, then two weeks of minor inconvenience will be worth it. If numbers continue to rise, however, we may need to take even stricter measures. The COVID numbers can be found by logging into MyFranciscan, clicking on the Coronavirus tab, then Fall 2021 COVID-19 Cases.

Do know of our prayers, and let us keep one another in prayer.

God Bless,

Father Dave Pivonka, TOR, President  
Dr. Daniel Kempton, Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Mr. Brennan Pergi, Vice President of Operations