

February 7, 2021

Dear Campus Community,

Due to the continuing surge in COVID-19 cases, revealed at the campus's symptomatic and asymptomatic testing sites, [the operational posture of the campus has been raised to "High Risk."](#) The decision to raise the risk level, just two days after it was raised to "Elevated Risk," was made in consultation with the Commonwealth's Department of Public Health after a further increase in the prevalence of positive cases reported among students since Thursday.

This new designation will have a significant impact on our UMass community, both on and off campus for its duration. It will go into effect at 2 p.m. today, Sunday, February 7 and be in place for a minimum of 14 days. It will only be lifted when public health conditions improve substantially.

The public health measures that will be implemented during this period include the transition of all in-person classes to remote format. All students, whether residing in campus residences halls or in off-campus housing in the surrounding area, are directed to self-sequester. Self-sequestration means that students must stay in their residences, both on and off campus, except to get meals, undergo twice-weekly COVID testing, or to attend medical appointments. In addition, to minimize potential spread, students should refrain from travel from campus or outside the surrounding area. Failure to comply with these directives is a violation of the Code of Student Conduct and will result in disciplinary action, which may include removal from residence halls and/or suspension. Also, all campus athletic competitions and practices are cancelled.

Students who are staffing campus testing and vaccination clinics and laboratories are exempted from these restrictions, and the testing and vaccination clinics will continue operations as scheduled. Other student workers performing essential functions, such as research, residential life, or transportation, should consult with their supervisors as to how their work schedules will be affected. On-site and hybrid staff should also consult with their supervisors regarding their work schedules. Campus research, clinical activities and core operations will continue uninterrupted.

To many of you these may seem like drastic measures, but faced with the surge in cases we are experiencing in our campus community, we have no choice but to take these steps. By acting aggressively now, we are confident we can contain this surge and more quickly return to normal operations, including a resumption of in-person classes and organized student activities. Our extensive planning process anticipated the possibility of this occurrence, and we are prepared to take swift and decisive action to protect our community. Be assured that in all we do, the health and well-being of our students, faculty and staff are of paramount concern.

I would also remind you that all of us must do our part. We have a collective responsibility for the safety of ourselves and others, and I deeply appreciate the vast majority of students who are complying with public health protocols. Contact tracing data indicates that transmission of the virus is especially prevalent among some undergraduate students not following social distancing and mask protocols. From Feb. 2-4, the latest three days of testing results at UMass, we have had 298 positive tests, and we now have a total of 398 active cases. For the latest updates and details on the university's COVID-19 response, visit [www.umass.edu/spring](http://www.umass.edu/spring).

Let this moment be a stark reminder to any of you who may have been cavalier about COVID-19 that your individual behavior has a profound impact on everyone in your community. If each of us follows proper protocols to help protect the community, we can get through this trying time sooner and stronger.

Sincerely,

Chancellor Kumble R. Subbaswamy

[University of Massachusetts Amherst](http://www.umass.edu)