

UMassAmherst

Feb. 26, 2021

Dear Campus Community,

The Public Health Promotion Center (PHPC) is closely monitoring COVID-19 test results and contact tracing for the UMass community, and we have seen a steady decrease in the positivity rate over the last four weeks. As a result, our shift last Monday to an Elevated operational posture has provided the campus the opportunity to lift some campus restrictions.

We want to thank the great majority of our students and entire campus community for persevering during this difficult time and following vital public health protocols. Given the continuing decline in active COVID cases and positivity rates, we are announcing that the university will reopen dine-in service beginning Monday, March 1, [employing the green checkmark system](#) to ensure campus safety. [UMass Dining](#) will communicate details this weekend. This decision is in concert with Governor Charlie Baker's announcement yesterday that it is appropriate to lessen restrictions on dining and other activities across the state given recent progress in fighting the pandemic.

Close evaluation of our testing data has allowed us to loosen some restrictions. Following the early-February surge and subsequent shift to High-Risk operational posture, the positivity rate for COVID tests has declined. During the first week of spring classes from Feb. 1-6, the campus had a positivity rate of 2.41%, which resulted in the move to Elevated Risk operational posture on Feb. 5 and then to the High-Risk operational posture on Feb. 7. Under High-Risk restrictions, the positivity rate decreased to 1.90% during the first week (Feb. 7-14) and then further decreased to 1.12% during the second week (February 15-21). The current seven-day positivity rate, [posted on our testing dashboard](#) on Feb. 26, is 0.76%. The Commonwealth's current seven-day positivity rate is 1.85%.

Recent cases among students span all academic levels and residential settings. There is no evidence of transmission between students and university staff or faculty. Data from case investigations and contact tracing indicate that transmission is being driven by some students failing to follow social distancing and mask protocols in social and residential settings.

We must all be aware that transmission can occur in large gatherings as well as in small gatherings of less than 10 persons. Students should limit in-person activities to their social bubble, while wearing masks, both inside and outside.

To protect your health and the health of our community, continue wearing a mask, [socializing only within your bubble](#), and testing regularly. These practices are essential to preventing and mitigating further spread of the virus and getting us closer to resuming normal activities. As the weather improves, Student Affairs and Campus Life is planning additional activities, such as this week's very successful PondFIRE event, that meet social-distancing requirements.

We also want to provide an important reminder about testing requirements and the green checkmark system that is part of the

Campus Health Hub. For students getting tested twice weekly, please note that you cannot get tested on two consecutive days. Twice-a-week testing means testing every four days, so we recommend a Monday/Thursday or Tuesday/Friday schedule to remain in compliance. If you are not in compliance, you will see a yellow checkmark indicating you are non-compliant with testing or have not submitted your daily symptom self-check. For details, [please refer to a set of FAQs](#) dedicated to the green checkmark system.

Additionally, you should answer a telephone call from the UMass Public Health Team or the Massachusetts Department of Public Health if they reach out. Contact tracers, some of whom are your peers, are judgment-free and will keep your information confidential.

We will continue to closely monitor the situation and will provide regular updates to the campus community.

Sincerely,

Co-Directors of the Public Health Promotion Center (PHPC)

Jeffrey Hescocock, Executive Director of Environmental Health and Safety
Ann Becker, Public Health Director

[University of Massachusetts Amherst](#)