

January 20, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

As we come to the end of week 2 of the semester, I want to thank all of you for your tremendous efforts in getting the semester started. It is a challenging time but there are indications that the Omicron virus may be peaking in our area. That is good news; however, our environment continues to be very dynamic.

COVID-19 UPDATES

COVID-19 Vaccination Update and Masking Practices

As you know, all members of the RIT community are required to be fully vaccinated and boosted. Additionally, the masking mandate continues. These measures will help ensure the safety of our entire community. We continue to communicate with public health officials and monitor our campus situation and we will adjust our protocols as necessary. We have entered a new phase of the pandemic where the focus has shifted from counting the number of cases to monitoring the rate of hospitalizations and severity of illness. At the same time, the senior leadership team is very aware that people may get sick and that the challenges related to illness are real. We are all learning how to live with the virus and I encourage faculty or staff to talk with their supervisors when challenges arise.

[Proof of the booster](#) is required to be uploaded into Oracle by January 31 or within 14 days of becoming eligible for the booster. I am happy to report that Wegmans will be on campus for several dates in late January/early February to administer boosters to faculty, staff and students. Details about the clinics can be found [here](#).

Support for Students in Quarantine/Isolation

Over the past year and a half, faculty and staff have been called upon to support academic continuity for students who are in quarantine/isolation, and I greatly appreciate your efforts. Some faculty have been asked by students to modify the course modality while they are quarantined, isolated, or otherwise not in class: for example, to provide a live stream of a class that meets exclusively in person. Faculty are under no obligation to change the course modality, but rather, are asked to work with students to help them maintain academic continuity in other ways. For further detail and suggestions for how faculty can work with students, click [here](#).

As a reminder, there could be a lag in the official notification from the Registrar of students in quarantine or isolation or no notification in situations where students experience other illnesses. Students can also inform faculty that they are unable to attend class for these reasons by email or by using the remote access needs widget in myCourses. The widget includes a fillable PDF that students can complete and email to their faculty specifying the duration of the absence. I encourage faculty to add the widget to their course home page so that this option is available to students in their classes. I also ask faculty to be judicious when asking students to provide physician documentation about any absences due to illness. While policy does allow this practice, it can be difficult to see a physician on short notice and students may choose to attend class while ill rather than have an unexcused absence. During the pandemic, it is especially important that those experiencing symptoms stay home and so your flexibility in this area is appreciated.

Events and Meetings

As a reminder, [new guidelines for events and meetings](#) have been implemented. These guidelines will remain in place until February 11 or until further notice.

Stay Informed

The [RIT Safety Plan](#) continues to guide our COVID-19 response and the [RIT Ready](#) website is the best source for staying informed. I encourage you to check both frequently. Also, all university communications about RIT's COVID-19 response can be found [here](#).

SPRING SEMESTER UPDATES

Spring Pulse Surveys

Pulse surveys will be distributed later this week to faculty and students. They are focused on collecting information to help determine the percentage of undergraduate courses to be offered online in fall 2022. This is part of our post-pandemic efforts to create a course modality distribution that meets the needs of students and faculty alike. Please take a few minutes to respond to the survey.

Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., will deliver the keynote address at the Expressions of King's Legacy on January 27, at noon in the Gordon Field House and Activities Center. Details can be found [here](#). The 2022 Let Freedom Ring keynote lecture by Thomas Warfield, senior lecturer at NTID and director of the RIT Dance Program, was postponed due to the recent winter storm and will be rescheduled.

Provost's Office Hours

Provost's Office Hours are held regularly. Each office hour includes an update on the university's response to COVID, important news relevant to Academic Affairs, and time for questions. Notes and presentations are posted on the [Office of the Provost website](#) following each session. All faculty and staff in Academic Affairs are welcome. You may [register here](#).

FINALLY...

As mentioned earlier in this message, I have heard from many faculty and staff that the start of the semester has been challenging for many reasons. I want to assure you that I understand and acknowledge the hard work you've all done in supporting our students and their academic continuity and the ongoing challenges related to COVID-19. I recognize that there are staff shortages across campus which has increased workloads for many of you. The deans and I are ready to support you in every way we can and I encourage you talk with your supervisor or your Human Resources manager if you feel you need additional help in managing challenges. I remain hopeful that operations will be more normal as the semester progresses. As always, I encourage you to reach out with your questions and concerns by sending an email to provost@rit.edu.

Sincerely,

Ellen Granberg, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs