COVID-19 Action & Return Plan

Last Updated – August 5, 2021
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Preface

This plan is designed to be a living document that is used throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan is subject to change at any time based on new information about COVID-19 or lessons learned as the pandemic continues. This document should be considered a guideline and not a policy.

The decisions made which form this document are guided by the Massachusetts Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control recommendations. If either of these organizations change their guidance or recommendations on the topics described below, this document will move to match those revised guidance or recommendations. Additionally, all mandates by the Commonwealth or local government will be immediately implemented and enforced. The College will always err on the side of health and safety and if circumstances occur on campus, or in the immediate geographic area, which necessitate stricter guidelines in the name of safety then the plan may change.

Best efforts will be made to include a representative sample of the College community when updating the plan, however there may be instances where decisions must be made quickly for the health and safety of the College Community, therefore distribution prior to consensus may take place.
Guiding Principles

- that work areas are modified if need be for optimum safety
- the precautions outlined in this document are such that when a positive case occurs areas are not totally incapacitated by quarantine and services can continue
- that classroom capacities provide safe social distancing measures
- cleaning of buildings can be maintained and supported by Facilities
- that personal contact tracing is in place, and employees understand why it is necessary
- that an evaluation of how the community coming onto campus will affect various areas is conducted

Face to Face Classroom Instruction

It is fully appreciated that returning our students to campus is a priority; As such, face to face classroom instruction will return in the Fall of 2021 for the majority of classes. There are still many online and hybrid classes being offered for those students who do not wish to come to campus or wish to spend minimal time on campus.

Mask Requirements

The College has determined that everyone entering a College owned building must wear a mask through the Fall 2021 semester.

Any student or employee who believes they have come into contact with someone how has an active case of COVID-19 MUST immediately report that information to the College Health Officer or COVID-19 Emergency Manager.

Campus Health Officer
Alex Wiltz Director of Public Safety - 413-775-1111

COVID-19 Emergency Manager
Dan Nietsche - 413-775-1493

It is important for all individuals that they continue to wear a face covering or mask at all times while inside to help prevent the spread COVID-19 to other people. People who show no symptoms of illness may still be able to spread COVID-19.

The CDC advises the following:
- Wear a face covering or mask that covers your nose and mouth.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others who don’t live with you.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water aren’t available
- Get tested if you have been exposed to or have symptoms associated with COVID-19.

When you wear a face covering or cloth mask, it should:
- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face,
- Be secured with ties or ear loops,
• Include multiple layers of fabric,
• Allow for breathing without restriction, and
• Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape.
Symptom Monitoring and Positive Case Mitigation

With the current spread of COVID-19, it is likely that fully repopulating the campus will result in contact with individuals who test positive for COVID-19. Although precautions will be taken to prevent spread of the virus, the College must be prepared to mitigate any affects.

Detection

The College must be prepared for the potential of needing to address positive exposure cases within our campus community. Employees and students will need to communicate if they become ill and have been on campus up to 2 days prior from the onset of symptoms or lab confirmed positive test. The college will immediately respond by performing appropriate contact tracing procedures in conjunction with the local health department, implement mitigation responses such as decontaminating work areas, and informing unvaccinated personnel and student(s) that they may have been exposed. It is important that all employees and students that come onto campus are able to account for all individuals they have come into contact with 2 days prior from the onset of symptoms or lab confirmed positive test.

All individuals must be free of ANY symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 before coming to the College.

Students who believe they are sick should notify their faculty member, who will contact the Campus Health Officer or COVID-19 Emergency Manager and consult with their primary care physician.

Employees who believe they are sick or has come in contact with someone who has a verified positive test for COVID-19 shall notify their supervisor, and the College Health Officer or COVID-19 Emergency Manager.

Campus Health Officer
Alex Wiltz Director of Public Safety - 413-775-1111

COVID-19 Emergency Manager
Dan Nietsche – 413-775-1493

At this time, COVID-19 symptoms include one or more of the following per current CDC Guidelines:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
For the most up-to-date list, please visit:

Mitigation
Anyone that has tested positive for COVID-19, or has had prolonged contact with someone with COVID-19, will quarantine in accordance with the current quarantine guidelines at the direction of local public health officials and the College Health Officer or designee.

_Prolonged contact can be defined as an unvaccinated person who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes)._ If the individual starts to show symptoms but has not been tested for COVID-19, it is highly recommended that this occur in consultation with their Primary Care Provider. If the person does test positive they should follow the guidance of local public health officials, the College Health Officer, or their Primary Care Provider.

Contact Tracing
If an individual has tested positive for COVID-19 and has been on campus, the College Health Officer or designee will begin the contact tracing process in partnership with the local public health department. The following steps will be taken:

The College Health Officer will work with the individual to identify anyone that they have had on campus contact with, for 2 days prior of the onset of symptoms or a positive test. A notice will be sent to each individual that they have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. Each exposure individual will be interviewed and guidance will be given on quarantine, testing, and return to campus. The local health department for the campus (Greenfield, Northampton, or Montague) will be notified of the possible exposure and will assist the College with notifying other local health departments and MA DPH.

Returning to Campus
Anyone who had symptoms (listed above) will need to meet the following requirement to return to campus:

1. At least 24 hours has passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever (less than 100.4) without the use of fever reducing medications.
2. Improvement of respiratory symptoms.
3. At least 10 days have passed since the first symptoms were noticed.

Specific programs may also require:

1. The individual has had a negative COVID-19 test and documentation has been provided to the College Health Officer or designee.

2 https://www.mass.gov/doc/contact-tracing-scripts/download
Post-positive Sanitation
If an individual who has tested positive was on campus, the individual will be contacted to obtain where on campus they were over the prior 2 days from onset of symptoms or a lab confirmed test. A list of possible areas with exposure will be created for decontamination to occur. The Director of Facilities Management will be notified of the possible areas of exposure and will coordinate decontamination following CDC and MA DPH guidelines, along with industry best practices.

Campus Access Plan
• Campus buildings will reopen to normal operation hours on August 16. These hours are:
  o Main Campus
    ▪ Monday- Thursday 7am-10pm
    ▪ Friday & Saturday 7am-5pm
    ▪ Sunday Closed
  o Downtown and Smith Voc
    ▪ Hours are currently set based on classes and programs at these locations.
• The general public is allowed in campus buildings.
• Student Services will resume operating hours starting August 23, 2021.
• No outside events will be hosted on campus for the Fall of 2021 without approval from the College Health Officer or designee.

Phased Staffing
As staffing on-site increases and operations expand, officials will closely monitor and assess the potential spread of the virus, as well as existing policies and procedures to mitigate it. If localized outbreaks emerge, tighter restrictions and reduced staffing may need to be implemented again.

Currently, August 16th is the set date for offices to resume normal operations on campus. Each supervisor will assess what their needs are and assign staffing levels to meet that need. The college Emergency Manager should be consulted with questions about space utilization and other COVID-19 concerns.

Social Distancing
Aside from being fully vaccinated and/or wearing a mask, keeping space between you and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to the COVID-19 virus and slowing its spread. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important for all people to wear a mask and to follow the social distancing guidelines, even if you have no symptoms. Social distancing is important for everyone, especially to help protect people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Classroom Distancing
The enrollment capacity for each class has been determined by the size of the classroom in which the class will take place. Each student and the instructor will have 36 square feet allotted to them to maintain social distancing. In many cases classes were capped at a level that provide more than 36 square feet per person but this is minimum that was used.
Use of Mask

Putting on the face covering/disposable mask
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to handling the face covering/disposable mask.
- Ensure the face-covering/disposable mask fits over the nose and under the chin.
- Situate the face-covering/disposable mask properly with nose wire snug against the nose (where applicable).
- Tie straps behind the head and neck or loop around the ears.
- Throughout the process: Avoid touching the front of the face covering/disposable mask.

Taking off the face covering/disposable mask
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when removing the face covering/disposable mask.
- When taking off the face covering/disposable mask, loop your finger into the strap and pull the strap away from the ear, or untie the straps.
- Wash hands immediately after removing.

Handwashing
Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash your hands after touching your face.

Gloves
Healthcare workers and others in high-risk areas should use gloves as part of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), but according to the CDC, gloves are not necessary for general use and do not replace good hand hygiene. Washing your hands often is considered the best practice for common everyday tasks.

Goggles/Face Shields
Staff do not need to wear goggles or face shields as part of general activity on campus. Good hand hygiene and avoiding touching your face are generally sufficient for non-healthcare environments.

Meetings
It is encouraged that in-person meetings are limited to keeping 3 feet distance between each person. All attendees are required to wear a mask or face covering while sharing space in a common room. It is encouraged that meetings held in-person also have the availability for individuals to attend virtually.

Mental and Emotional Wellbeing
All employees are eligible to anonymously access the services offered by the college’s Employee Assistance Program. The EAP is designed to help employees, their dependents and household members manage all aspects of their lives. It offers professional short-term counseling, referrals, and resources. The EAP can be contacted at 1-800-451-1834.
Students should contact the Wellness Center to access service to assist with mental and emotional wellbeing.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

Q: Will vaccinations be required at GCC for students or employee?
A: The Presidents of the 15 Community Colleges have made the decision that students and employees will not be required to be vaccinated for Fall 2021.

Q: Will social distancing guidelines still need to be followed?
A: MA DPH and the CDC recommend that people continue to follow social distancing guidelines. The College has gone a step further in setting classroom capacities in accordance with a minimum of 36 square feet for each individual whether vaccinated or not.

Q: Can students work in groups/pairs?
A: Yes, they can. If a student feels uncomfortable working in a group, reasonable efforts should be made to accommodate the student.

Q: What are the guidelines for classes that meet outdoors?
A: If a person is unvaccinated they should wear a mask while in a group even if outdoors.

Q: Can a person, working alone, take off their mask while indoors?
A: Yes, if a person is alone in a closed space, such as an office or study room, they do not need to wear a mask.

Q: Will there still be caps on the number of people allowed into each space at the college?
A: With the Governor lifting all capacity limits there are not currently capacity limits for any common space on campus beyond normal posted limits.

Q: Can we ask fellow employees if they are vaccinated/unvaccinated?
A: It is not against HIPPA to ask a fellow employee their vaccine status. They are, however, not required to answer you or show proof of vaccination. It is strongly discouraged to ask for this information unless there is a justifiable reason such as contact tracing. It is against HIPPA to ask a health care professional for this information or for them to give you the status of an individual.

Q: Can we ask students if they are vaccinated/unvaccinated?
A: It is not against FERPA to ask a student their vaccine status. They are, however, not required to answer you or show proof of vaccination. It is strongly discouraged to ask for this information unless there is a justifiable reason such as contact tracing. It is against FERPA to ask a health care professional for this information or for them to give you the status of an individual.

Q: Do I have to leave between classes?
A: No, common spaces are open to everyone and should be used as individuals are comfortable.

Q: What will the procedures for coming to campus be? Will everyone need to check-in somewhere?
A: There will not be mandatory check-in upon entry. The health screening process will end on August 13,
Q: Will there be mandatory attendance taking for every class (to keep track of who is present due to COVID tracking)?
A: No. If there is a confirmed case in a classroom the College will use the official roster to alert everyone.

Q: Will classes with students who are immunocompromised have to run under stricter guidelines?
A: An immunocompromised person should consult their primary care physician on what is the safest way possible for them to attend classes. Disability Services can assist with accommodations as needed. Additionally, if a student would feel more comfortable with online or hybrid classes, they should contact their advisor.

Q: Will COVID-19 testing still be taking place at the college?
A: There will be some form of testing taking place on Campus through at least the end of the Fall semester. The College will have COVID-19 testing available for those needing testing for clinical purposes or individuals who have had an exposure on campus.

Q: I am concerned about transmitting COVID-19 to my family at home.