COVID-19 MITIGATION
and
RESPONSE PLAN
for
STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

Updated August 2022
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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.

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 consultation 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
- cleaning of buildings can be maintained and supported by Facilities
- that personal contact tracing is in place, and employees understand why it is necessary
- An evaluation of how the outside community coming onto campus will affect various areas has been conducted and a policy has been adopted
- That all students and employees are fully vaccinated unless they have received an accommodation.

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 continue 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 masks are optional for vaccinated individuals entering a college owned building. Please treat those that choose to wear a mask with respect. If you need a mask there are surgical type masks available at all major entryways to the campus buildings.

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

Campus Health Officer / COVID-19 Emergency Manager
William Salifu-Tex - - COVID-19@gcc.mass.edu
Symptom Monitoring and Positive Case Mitigation

With the current status 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 effects.

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 come in contact with a person who has a lab confirmed case of COVID-19, themselves become ill or have had a lab confirmed positive test. The college will immediately respond by implementing mitigation responses such as decontaminating work areas, and informing personnel and student(s) that they may have been exposed.

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 the following people:
- Campus Health Officer/ COVID-19 Emergency Manager
- Faculty or instructors for your classes
- Their primary care physician

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

Campus Health Officer / COVID-19 Emergency Manager
William Salifu-Tex — covid-19@gccc.mass.edu

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: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html
Procedures for Returning to Campus

In any of the scenarios below you must email covid-19@gcc.mass.edu for further instructions. Based on each individual scenario, the guidance given may differ than what is described below.

For Those That Have Been in Close Contact with A Covid-19 Positive Person

Protocol for Vaccinated and Unvaccinated People

Start precautions immediately and continue for 10 full days. The date of your exposure is considered day 0. Day 1 is the first full day after your last contact with a person who has had COVID-19.

- Wear a high-quality mask (e.g., N95) any time you are around others inside your home or indoors in public.
- Even if you don’t develop symptoms, get tested at least 5 days after you last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Watch for symptoms until 10 days after you last had close contact with someone with COVID-19.
  - 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
- If you develop symptoms, isolate immediately and get tested. Continue to stay home until you know the results.

Get tested at least 5 full days after your last exposure

If you test positive, isolate immediately.

If you test negative, continue taking precautions through day 10

- Wear a high-quality mask when around others at home and indoors in public.
- Avoid being around people who are at high risk.
For Those That Are Symptomatic
You must get a COVID-19 test (either a rapid antigen test or a PCR test) as soon as practically possible. If the test is negative you can return to campus the day after you receive a negative result and you log your results via the link below.

You must also actively monitor yourself for the symptoms described below for the next ten days.

- 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

Please use this [LINK](#) to enter your test results.
For Those That Have Tested Positive

Isolation

Day 0 is your first day of symptoms or a positive viral test. **Day 1 is the first full day after your symptoms developed or your test specimen was collected.**

**IF YOU:**
Tested positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms, regardless of vaccination status

- Stay home for 5 days and isolate from others in your home.
- Wear a high-quality mask if you must be around others in your home.

**Ending isolation if you had symptoms**
End isolation after 5 full days if you are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and your symptoms are improving.

If you had **moderate illness**, isolate through day 10.

If you had **severe illness** or have a weakened immune system, consult your doctor before ending isolation.

**Ending isolation if you did NOT have symptoms**
End isolation after at least 5 full days after your positive test.
Campus Access Plan

- Campus buildings will remain on normal operational hours. These hours are:
  - Main Campus
    - Monday-Thursday 7am-10pm
    - Friday & Saturday 7am-5pm
    - Sunday Closed
- The general public is allowed in campus buildings. Please see the Campus Visitor Plan for more information.

Social Distancing

Aside from being fully vaccinated, 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.

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 1-844-263-1982.

Students should contact the Wellness Center to access service to assist with mental and emotional wellbeing. The Wellness Center can be reached at (413) 775-1332 or X1332 from a campus phone.

Visitor Policy

No visitor is permitted to be on campus if they are experiencing symptoms of illness or COVID-19 or have received a positive COVID-19 test in the previous ten days. Visitors who have been exposed to COVID-19 in the previous ten days must follow the CDC guidance. Visitors must notify the Office of Public Safety if they test positive within 48 hours of leaving campus. Visitors must follow all relevant federal and state travel advisories or orders.

All unvaccinated visitors must wear a mask at all times.

Notwithstanding the provisions outlined in this Policy, the College maintains complete discretion when restricting or permitting access to campus and may, in its sole discretion, amend this policy at any time.
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Will vaccinations be required at GCC for students or employee?
A: Yes, The Presidents of the 15 Community Colleges have made the decision that students and employees will be required to be vaccinated starting January 4, 2022.

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: 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 HIPAA 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 HIPAA 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.

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. Currently, the Curative site is located in the East Building and offers free testing.
Q: I am concerned about transmitting COVID-19 to my family at home.