



Additional Information on Updates to the Royals Back Together Plan for Spring 2022

January 20, 2022

Booster Mandate

Booster Requirement for Students and Employees by February 28, 2022

The decision regarding booster shots was rooted in our goal to maintain an in-person experience for our students. The CDC recently released recommendations that individuals stay “up to date” with COVID-19 vaccinations, including booster shots when eligible.

Booster shots restore a level of protection from serious illness that has been found to diminish over time, and the CDC recommends that these benefits “... far outweigh the potential risks”. Also, getting a booster shot when eligible allows individuals to avoid the disruption of quarantine if exposed to someone who tests positive.

Compliance: The University is approaching boosters in a manner similar to the vaccine mandate. Students who choose not to comply and who are not approved for an exemption will be unenrolled from classes. In such cases, the University will follow its published schedule to issue refunds. The last day to receive a partial refund is Friday, Feb. 25.

Booster Shots for Those with Current or Recent Infections: The CDC recommends waiting until you recover from your illness (even if you do not have symptoms) and can meet the criteria to discontinue isolation before receiving any dose of the vaccine. Individuals treated with monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma need to wait for as much as 90 days before being eligible for a booster shot. Persons with current or prior infections should consult with their healthcare professional to determine if they are eligible for a booster now or should request an exemption.

Higher Grade Masking Requirement

In addition, the experience both on campus and in our community during Intersession demonstrates the need for stronger protocols to protect against Omicron, a much more transmissible version of the SARS-co-V2 virus. The University’s decision to require

higher grade masks (e.g. N95, KN95 or KF94) or double masking (e.g. a cloth mask worn over a surgical mask) improves protection against the Omicron variant and follows the latest guidance from the CDC. **Masks must be properly fitted while wearing.**

Once the community is fully “up to date” on their vaccinations and boosters and the current spike decreases, **the University will reconsider this standard.**

As with all of the steps we announced, this new protocol supports our hope to remain in-person, rather than pivoting to virtual learning. Our decision also eliminates some of the least effective masking practices, based on research results that have recently received extensive news coverage.

The University has some higher-grade masks in its current health and safety inventory and is working to secure additional masks for the start of the spring semester. A limited supply of these masks will be available upon request for members of the University community. Students can secure a limited supply of masks through a process still under development. Departments can secure masks and other personal protective equipment by completing an online ordering form for the Purchasing Department. Departments should monitor their use of PPE and request additional supplies 7-10 days before running out

Entry PCR Test Requirement

As stated in the January 14 update, all undergraduate and graduate students who will access campus, regardless of vaccination status, **are required to get a PCR test no earlier than Thursday, January 20, with results uploaded to the Student Health Portal no later than noon on Tuesday, January 25.**

Note: Colleges and universities are considered “congregate settings” by the CDC, so testing is free for students who need it. Students would need to answer yes to the question “do you live or work in a congregate setting?” when scheduling the PCR test at places like CVS and Rite Aid.

Prior Positive Cases: Students who have previously reported a confirmed positive COVID test result to the University over the past 90 days (i.e. since October 27) **do not need to re-test**. Similarly, **students who tested positive through an at-home test** during this same timeframe can request a reporting form by emailing vaccines@scranton.edu **to be exempted from the testing requirements.**

Current Positive Cases: Students who test positive **should not come to campus**. They should contact Student Health Services and upload their positive test results to the Student Health Portal. An assigned contact tracer will follow up to discuss the next steps and notify professors of their absence until isolation ends. Professors will work with students individually in these cases based on classes impacted.

Limited Campus-Based Testing: Recognizing the challenge that some students will have in scheduling a test, the University is arranging for **limited on-campus testing to**

be available on Friday, Monday and Tuesday (January 21, 24 and 25). Testing slots will be on a first-come, first-served basis with priority given to students already on campus during Intersession. Campus-based test results will be available on the same day as testing, and students testing positive will need to isolate at home or in their off-campus residence. **Student Life is distributing information today to students with a link to sign up for testing.**

Lastly, if a student is still waiting on results after noon on Tuesday (1/25), they can contact studentlife@scranton.edu to discuss their options.