



8/24/2021 Email from Dr. Stevens to Students

All:

Several have asked that the administration speak more about steps being taken at College of Saint Mary to ensure the safety of our community in the midst of the Omnicron wave of the pandemic. We are very aware of rising hospitalizations within our county and the continuing risk of exposure and sickness. While the vast majority of Omnicron cases appear to evidence milder symptoms than earlier waves of the virus, the threat of 'long' COVID remains serious. People are reporting respiratory issues and a lingering cough.

If you aren't feeling well, fill out the health form and stay home. We are urging all students to do the same. We have a group of faculty/staff who are fully informed on the CDC guidance regarding exposures and sickness and they call those who submit health forms and advise them about what they should do. If a student is reporting being sick, her/his faculty will be informed. In addition, the COVID monitoring team is meeting every two weeks and tracking our experience of the virus spread. They have updated the tracking format and will be publishing it each week on Tuesday with the prior week's statistics. Members of the COVID monitoring team include Drs. Jeff Keyte, Kathleen Zajic, Amanda Roe and Assistant Dean of Student Development and Success, Kris Czerwec, and Administrative Support Staff, Rita Wiley. The team is chaired by Director of Safety and Security, Dr. Dave Ferber. Please direct any questions or concerns to one of them or to any member of the Senior Leadership team.

The vast majority of our faculty, staff and students are vaccinated. However, the Center for Disease Control is telling us that being fully vaccinated now includes the booster shot. We urge you to get the booster shot. The research and statistics show that if one has received the booster shot, they are significantly less likely to be hospitalized if infected with the virus. Booster shots are readily available across the city and we urge you all to be fully vaccinated.

As you know, the Douglas County Health Department has now issued a mask mandate. While we have had a mask mandate since March, 2020 at CSM, we urge you to wear a mask when you are out and about around town. Again, the research shows that masks do work despite the controversies raging in our society. We have placed N95 masks in the Information Center, Express Center, the Library, Robyn Kniffen's office and in the Lied Center. If you forget your mask or if a student forgets, please direct them to these sites to obtain a mask.

Finally, let us pray for all those who have lost loved ones to this virus, all those in health care who are treating the sick and supporting their families...and that the Spirit will inspire us to heal the divisions spawned by differing opinions about how best to stay healthy and safe.

*Dr. Stevens*

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