

Bennington College
Message from the President
August 18, 2021

Dear incoming and returning students, families, faculty, and staff,

We are so looking forward to having everyone back on campus. Thank you to students and families who joined the webinar on Friday; here is [the recording](#) for anyone who missed it.

Below is more information about COVID guidelines and arrival from our COVID Task Force. We will have frequent information coming, especially around arrival, and we will be sending a weekly message. If you have any specific questions, [please let us know](#) and we will be in touch.

Thank you,



Laura Walker

All Students

All students should have done one of three things:

- [Submitted vaccination record](#)
- [Requested medical or religious exemption](#)
- [Let us know if you won't be fully vaccinated upon arrival](#) (i.e., if you have not received all doses two weeks before arrival)

The majority of students have filled out one of these forms—thank you! For the few who have not yet, please do so as soon as possible, as this is key to our planning.

Families at Student Arrival

- Vaccinated family members are welcome to help with move-in and enter houses/buildings on campus.

- Vaccinated families of incoming students are welcome to attend the family program from 2:00-4:00 pm on Friday followed by a family send-off. Families should plan to leave campus at 5:00 pm, when students begin their formal orientation.
- Unvaccinated family members and friends may help unload the car, but may not enter any buildings, nor participate in the family program.
- All families—as well as students, faculty, and staff—are expected to wear a mask during arrival, indoors and outdoors, regardless of vaccination status. The College will be relying on the honor system for family members' vaccination status. We trust that all families understand the importance of maintaining a healthy, safe environment for our students, and that arrival time is a particularly important time to adhere to safety guidelines.

Quarantine for Students Who are Not Yet Fully Vaccinated

Students who are not yet fully vaccinated should be tested within 72 hours before arrival, and they will need to quarantine until they have a negative test result from their test upon arrival— hopefully they will get this within ~24-36 hours.

- **International and New Student Orientations:** Students who need to quarantine upon arrival will not be released until they receive a negative result from the arrival COVID testing. This means that they may have to participate in orientation meetings virtually until then.
- **Roommates:** It may be that there is a not-yet-vaccinated student rooming with a vaccinated student. Medically, the vaccinated student is at low risk, and with pre-arrival and Day 1 testing, we are seeking to minimize the risk further. However, it is crucial that all students either [update their vaccination status](#) or [let us know if they will not be fully vaccinated](#), so we can fully plan.
- **Dining:** We will set up times for students in quarantine to go pickup food and return to their rooms.

Faculty and Staff Vaccination Records

All faculty and staff must [submit proof of vaccination](#) by August 20. Please be sure to upload your vaccine documentation to ADP by the end of day on Friday.

Commitment of Shared Responsibility

The [Commitment of Shared Responsibility](#) was a key part of our success last year—ensuring everyone was clear about expectations and reasonings. Ali Tartaglia will be working on updating it for this year, which all members of the community will need to agree to before the start of term. More information to come next week.

Arrival Testing

- **House Chairs** (arriving Friday, August 20-Sunday, August 22) will receive instructions upon arrival when they check in with Student Life.
- **International students** (beginning arriving Tuesday, August 24) will receive instructions upon arrival when they check in with International Student Services.
- **Incoming students** who arrive between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm on Friday, August 27 will test in the tent adjacent to check-in. New students should contact [Student Life](#) if arriving outside of this time period so that we can prepare for arrival and testing.
- **Returning students** will be tested in VAPA; they will receive instructions when they arrive.
- **Faculty and staff** will be tested the week of August 23; scheduling details will be shared in the near future. Faculty must have received a negative test result before they meet with any students in person.
- **All students** will be tested again between days 3 and 5.
- The small group of students, faculty, and staff with medical or religious exemptions will be tested weekly as well. They will receive information about that process. Please be in touch with [Health Services](#) (Students) or [HR](#) (faculty and staff) if you need to request an exemption and have not yet.

Test Results

- Students who are quarantining and test negative will receive emails from Student Life releasing them from quarantine.
- Students who are fully vaccinated will only be contacted in the event their arrival test is positive.
- Faculty and staff will only be contacted in the event their test is positive; they will be contacted by Health Services.
- We will be updating [the website](#) as test results roll in, and will include updates in the weekly message as well.

In the event of positive cases

- Any student, faculty, or staff member who tests positive will be contacted by Health Services, and will be asked to isolate. Students will receive care from Health Services, and we will walk students through the process to relocate to separate housing, the plan for receiving meals, and meeting any other needs. Faculty or staff should consult their healthcare provider.
- We will follow [CDC](#) and Vermont Department of Health guidelines regarding quarantine. The Health Department will contact anyone who is considered a close contact and provide guidance.

Vaccine Access

- For students who are not yet fully vaccinated, we are waiting to hear from the state which vaccine(s) will be able to administer on campus. However,

Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC) has access to the Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, and Pfizer vaccines, and we can connect students there if they would prefer a particular vaccine, or they need a particular vaccine to complete a series.

- For any International students who began a series that is not one of the US-approved vaccines, please [let Health Services know](#), and we will guide you.
- We will assist students with getting booster doses, if and when it is indicated.
- Faculty and staff who need a vaccine can find ways to access through the [Department of Health](#).

Dining Hall Access for Faculty and Staff

We will start the term, as we did last year, with only students allowed in the dining hall. We may revisit this and possibly open the dining hall to vaccinated employees, pending how arrival goes and other factors.

Masking

As a reminder, everyone should be masking indoors this week, and indoors and outdoors as of this Sunday, through Convocation on Tuesday, August 31 at 12:00 pm.