
Coronavirus Disease 2019 & Health Update

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BENNINGTON COLLEGE

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

With recent news related to the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) globally and reports of isolated cases within the US, we are writing to provide an update regarding campus planning and recommendations.

We have established a coronavirus task force, coordinated by Oceana Wilson, Acting Dean of the College. Please feel free to be in touch with her with questions or concerns. We will continue to share information and updates as this unfolds.

Coronavirus Disease 2019

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 situation continues to evolve and we continue to use guidance from the [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC) and the [Vermont Department of Health](#), along with the [American College Health Association](#) (ACHA), to inform our preparation and response planning. At this time, the risk of the virus to Vermont remains low and, as of March 3, 2020, Vermont reports no cases of coronavirus in the state. The College is prepared to implement the recommendations of the Vermont Department of Health in the event that a member of the campus community tests positive for coronavirus.

Influenza

Influenza, or the flu, is active in our campus community, and we have confirmed cases present. The CDC indicates that flu activity is high and is predicted to continue for several weeks.

Campus Planning & Preparedness

If needed, plans are in place to provide isolation and support, including academic accommodations and meals, for students who may have to undergo testing for the coronavirus. The new coronavirus task force, coordinated by Oceana Wilson, Acting Dean of the College, will monitor the situation and CDC recommendations, as well as develop contingency plans for academic courses, housing, dining, facilities, and operations should there be a disruption to College-wide operations. Bennington College community members with questions or concerns are encouraged to [email the task force](#).

Travel Recommendations & Long Weekend Planning

The CDC has issued additional [travel recommendations](#) due to wide-spread and sustained community transition of the coronavirus. These recommendations impact travel to: China, Iran, Italy, Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong. As you prepare for Long Weekend, business, or academic-related travel, please use the CDC travel recommendations to inform your plans and consider the need to travel against the potential risk to yourself and the Bennington College community. In many cases, the safest option may be to postpone your travel.

Students Currently on Study Away/Exchange Programs

Academic Services staff are monitoring international travel warnings due to the coronavirus. In addition, they are in direct contact with Bennington students currently enrolled in Study Away or Exchange programs and are working with them individually based on their locations and the recommendations of their host institutions.

Prevention Measures

We encourage all community members to take measures to protect themselves and prevent the spread of these viruses. Hand sanitizer stations have been added in the Commons Dining Hall and in Roz's Cafe.

Both the influenza virus and the novel coronavirus have similar recommendations for prevention and protection:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home and away from public places when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough down into your elbow, but never into your hand.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Additionally, it is recommended to get a flu shot if you have not already done so this season. Flu shots are available through healthcare providers and many local pharmacies. The closest place to campus to receive a flu shot is Hannaford's Pharmacy.

Students

- If you have a fever and/or respiratory illness symptoms such as a cough or shortness of breath, please call Health Services. Health Services will conduct a screening and evaluation. Calling, rather than walking in, allows a clinician to screen on the phone for any risk factors, make appointments (if needed), share information, and limit the spread of any illness.
- Please do not self-diagnose. If you have any concerns, please be in touch with Health Services.
- Please be in touch with your faculty if you need to be absent from class due to illness, and do not attend classes if you have a fever or cough.

Faculty and staff

- If you develop a fever or respiratory-illness symptoms such as a cough or shortness of breath, please stay home and contact your primary care provider and/or SVMC ExpressCare for screening and recommendations. If staff need support accessing health care providers, please reach out to <mailto:benefits@bennington.edu>.
- Staff should be in touch with their supervisors if they need to stay home due to illness.
- Faculty should be in touch with the Provost's Office if they need to stay home due to illness and have questions regarding their absence.

Dartmouth-Hitchcock in Lebanon, NH

For Bennington College community members who have health care providers at Dartmouth-Hitchcock in Lebanon, NH, we are sharing the [following announcement](#) from the hospital.

Best,



Isabel Roche