



HEALTHY TOGETHER

This past year was challenging for the college on many fronts, but it was successful in the end because the Berry community chose to pull together even when there were heartfelt differences. With respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, some felt we were at times too intrusive in our requirements while others felt we should be mandating stronger mitigation measures. We made many decisions quickly, in the face of uncertainty, as circumstances changed from month to month.

Now, we look ahead to the fall semester with reasonable optimism as we track key national metrics: the number of fully vaccinated people has increased and consequently the number of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations has significantly decreased. And yet, we know from other places that this international pandemic is not over. Currently, the aggressive Delta variant is surging across the globe (e.g., England, India, China and Russia) and seems to be taking hold in America as cases in the U.S. have stopped falling in the month of June. Medical authorities in all of these countries agree, just as in the U.S., that vaccines are the surest way to defeat the pandemic and return to normal.

For this reason, we urge all members of the Berry community to be fully vaccinated before returning to campus in August.

Our goal for the fall is simple: to function as normally as possible while also ensuring the health of the campus community. Vaccines offer the best means by which we can resume normal operations immediately, with an emphasis on high quality academics and the fullness of the residential experience. Berry will be at full capacity this fall and we want to be free to function as normally as possible – in classrooms, residence halls, dining halls, rehearsal studios, sports venues, offices, and so on. Vaccines eliminate the need for other mitigation measures.

Return to Campus Protocol: For those providing evidence of immunity

- All students are asked to upload proof of being fully vaccinated (copy of their CDC vaccination card) this summer before returning to campus: <https://vikingweb.berry.edu/ICS/COVID-19/>
- Students who have had a positive PCR test for COVID-19 may submit that information as well; however, vaccination is still encouraged for these students because research indicates it reinforces the antibody response.
- Students may also submit a positive antibody test from a certified laboratory. We recognize that the evidence for antibody tests is still being reviewed by medical researchers.
- Students who submit one of the three forms of evidence above do not have to complete a PCR test for COVID-19 before returning to campus and will not have to test weekly during the fall semester unless circumstances change.
- Students who have been vaccinated will not need to quarantine if they are exposed to COVID-19 unless they show symptoms, at which time they will need to be tested.

Currently, approximately 75% of returning Berry students have provided one of the three forms of documentation (including vaccinations and antibody tests taken at Berry last spring.)

Return to Campus Protocol: For those who do not provide evidence of immunity

- If students have not submitted one of the three forms of evidence above, the protocols from the spring term remain in place. It is assumed these students do not have antibodies to COVID and are at greater risk of infection. Therefore, they will need to:
 - Obtain a negative PCR test for COVID-19 within 72 hours before returning to campus
 - Participate in ongoing antigen or PCR tests for COVID-19 every week as directed by the college based on the current circumstances; the cost will be charged to students.
 - Comply with masking guidelines that are instituted by the college for specific areas including classrooms and office spaces. Other mitigation measures may be added should circumstances warrant.
- If there are positive cases on campus this fall, any infected students will need to isolate off campus.
- Exposed students who have not been vaccinated will need to quarantine off campus as well.
- Because the college is full this fall, rooms will not be available for isolation and quarantine and students will need to make arrangements at their own expense.
- With the college back in regular session, classes will not routinely be available via remote learning (e.g., Zoom).

Town Hall June 23

We will conduct virtual town halls to discuss the fall opening. Please submit questions in advance by replying to this e-mail. If we have available time during the town hall, we will also be monitoring the Question and Answer feature in the Zoom call.

Wednesday, June 23 at 5:30 p.m.

Clearly, it would be best for the community if all members would choose to get vaccinated. Getting a vaccine is not something Berry believes it should need to mandate or require; rather, it is something we hope members of the community would want to do for themselves and for the good of others. One of the defining features of Berry is its emphasis on being a community that cares for, respects and looks after one another.

The research evidence in support of the effectiveness and safety of the vaccines is compelling. As of June 13, 2021, 174 million (or 53%) of Americans have received at least one vaccination shot. Hundreds of millions more around the world have been vaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccines are now among the most scrutinized vaccines ever and have been approved in the U.S. for children as young as 12. A number of misleading and false claims have been promulgated on social media, creating confusion for some. I encourage you to read straightforward information that has been prepared by expert medical sources rather than relying on unsubstantiated claims spread on social media. Be an educated and discerning reader.

Myths and Facts:

www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines-myth-versus-fact

The availability of vaccines for COVID-19 represents an amazing breakthrough and offers hope for dealing with emerging infectious diseases in the decades ahead. Between May and October of 2020, President Trump invested \$18 billion worth of taxpayer funding into the development of multiple vaccines, recognizing that the best strategy for ending any pandemic was to identify one or more effective vaccines. The effort in 2020 was far more successful than most observers predicted. Now it is time to benefit from this investment of America's resources.

Berry benefited last year by living up to its motto to act with the needs of others in mind. This culture of caring and responsibility was the basis for our overall success. This year, let us show the character and courage of Berry by our willingness to be vaccinated against COVID-19.
