

## MEMORANDUM

To: Rust College Students, Faculty and Staff  
From: Ivy R. Taylor, President  
Date: September 24, 2021  
Re: Updated COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

Greetings Bearcat Family,

Thank you for your continued cooperation in our efforts to keep everyone safe from COVID-19 and continue studying and learning together in person on the Rust College campus. We have implemented a robust effort to protect the campus community against the spread of COVID-19 including the following actions:

- Mandatory mask mandate for all employees and students indoors
- Investment in air purification systems for classroom buildings
- Expanded janitorial services and cleaning
- Weekly COVID testing for unvaccinated students, faculty, and staff
- Availability of thermometer stations throughout the campus
- Daily wellness checks for unvaccinated students, faculty, and staff
- Contact tracing procedures and notification of affected individuals
- Isolation and quarantine procedures for students
- On campus vaccination drives
- Campus wide town hall meeting with State health officer and state medical director to answer questions about the vaccine

I believe we all thought that by this fall, we would have turned a significant corner related to the ongoing pandemic due to the availability of an effective vaccine. Unfortunately, as I am sure you have seen in daily news reports, the pandemic is still raging due to the emergence of a more highly infectious variant of the original virus, as well as significant vaccine hesitancy around the nation. On our campus, since classes started, we have had 23 students and one staff member diagnosed as COVID-19 positive. Appropriate measures were taken for isolation of all these people.

While we believe that the measures we implemented have been effective, the ongoing nature of the pandemic has led to consideration of additional policies. In recent days, the Biden administration issued new requirements for organizations that employ over 100 people to require vaccination or ongoing testing. Rust College meets these criteria. Additionally, low vaccination rates among our Rust College students cause concern about the potential for a significant outbreak on the campus. Last week, the Rust College Board of Trustees voted to make

vaccination **mandatory** for all students, faculty, and staff to keep our campus safe and reduce the risk of serious illness or death.

In accordance with this new policy, **every member of the Rust College community is required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and provide proof of vaccination by November 15<sup>th</sup>**. Our goal is to ensure that at the start of the new semester in January, everyone on campus will be vaccinated. If you have a valid medical excuse for not receiving the vaccination, please provide documentation from a medical provider by November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Please note that the Board also approved a modification to our academic calendar which will end in person instruction and examinations by Thanksgiving. Students will not return to campus until the second semester begins in January. This will reduce the risk of spread of the virus on campus through holiday travel.

Additionally, we will continue to offer vaccinations on campus. Starting October 1<sup>st</sup>, every Friday from 9:30AM to 1:00PM at the Student Health Center, you can receive the vaccination. If you are not already vaccinated, you are not required to receive the vaccination on campus but must still provide your vaccination card as proof that you received the vaccine.

Additional specific instructions will be provided to students via Residence Life staff and the Student Success Office. For faculty and staff, your executive team member will provide additional information and instructions soon.

I understand that this is a significant step, but it is not one that the board or I take lightly. Our goal is to protect everyone's health as well as our ability to continue providing an exceptional educational experience and a safe work environment for students, faculty, and staff at Rust College.

## Mary LeSueur

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