**HR Lunch & Learn Meeting Notes**

**Tuesday, September 28, 2021 ~ Noon-1 pm**

**Zoom link:**

<https://wwu-edu.zoom.us/j/95838278147?pwd=WEc3VXBYMFJDRTF6em9ZNXZOZXBCUT09>

**Panel:**

**Business & Financial Affairs Division**

* + Lea Aune, Associate Director for HR
  + Sarah Crawford, Sr. Analytics Manager, HR
  + Dennis Dashiell, Assistant Director-Organizational & Professional Development, HR
  + Joyce Lopes, Vice President, BFA
  + Kathy Thompson, Assistant Director-Benefits & Operations, HR
  + Chyerl Wolfe-Lee, **Moderator** / Assistant Vice President for HR
  + Shelby Zimmerman, Manager, Transportation Services

**COVID-19 Response**

* + Holly Diaz, COVID-19 Support Manager / Manager, Counseling, Health and Wellness
  + Dr. David Hansen, Associate Medical Director, Student Health Center
  + Adam Lorio, COVID-19 Support Manager
* **Opening Comments by Chyerl Wolfe-Lee**

Introductions and thanks to the sign language interpreter. Quick poll on how people are feeling (see page 5 for results).

* **COVID-19 Update w/Dr. David Hansen, Holly Diaz and Adam Lorio**

Some really great news: After a report to the health department, the reaction was “Wow, Western is the safest place in Whatcom County right now.”

Mask and vaccine mandates make for the strongest mitigation strategies available.

* We’ll be living with Covid for along time and following all mitigating strategies, including not coming to work when you have any symptoms at all that could be Covid. It doesn’t take much to spread.
* We’re going to be seeing more positive cases than we had last year, seven positive cases yesterday alone.
* Also, it can be difficult to distinguish Covid from other respiratory infections during cold and flu season.

Testing facility at College Hall for students and staff open since last week.

* Unvaccinated people must be tested weekly.
* Testing 200-300 people per day.
* Employees with waivers will get specific instructions, but access to the testing facility is on High Street, not the main entrance.

About 96% of students have submitted Covid vaccine cards.

Total staff vaccination rate is 93% overall and 95% for permanent staff.

Voluntary testing for staff is at Northwest Labs.

Encourage students with concerns that they may have been exposed to Covid to call the SHC, who can walk them through the process.

* Can do rapid antigen testing along with PRC testing.
* Rapid test gives results within a half hour.
* If positive, they can self-isolate or if in housing, move into isolation spaces on campus.

The SHC and HR are checking appropriate vaccine lot numbers on cards and can confirm with the State if vaccine was done in Washington State. If anything doesn’t line up properly on a card, staff follow up with the submitter.

Booster shots vs third doses:

* Immune-compromised people should get a third shot.
* Moderna and Pfizer are showing differences in efficacy as time passes.
  + Moderna remaining stronger.
  + Some booster shots are being recommended for certain Pfizer recipients.
* Things are still not certain, but it seems likely that boosters will be needed in the future.

Covid dashboard will be getting updated daily once the data is ready.

Working on additional signage to direct students at College Hall.

When a student tests positive, student will be advised to let professor know. There will not necessarily be reporting for every positive test, will depend on circumstances.

Biochemistry on J&J is different from the mRNA vaccines, but protection levels appear stable.

Covid nurse team is doing some contact tracing for positive students, and the health department is doing back-up contact tracing as necessary.

The WA notification app seems less useful now that people are vaccinated. Western is not pushing it; people may sign up on their own.

What constitutes an outbreak? May have clusters. If we see multiple cases related to a single event, that would be considered an outbreak and will be handled by the rapid response team.

With some many folks vaccinated, many of the cases SHC is seeing are break through cases.

For staff without regular contact with students, is surveillance testing still recommended? Surveillance testing is meant for people on campus with waivers. Other testing can be done if staff want to participate.

Will faculty be called back to campus? Will try to follow up with answer.

Flu clinics are coming up on campus, all are strongly encouraged to get flu shots.

Symptoms with positive cases have typically look a lot like cold symptoms. Students were much sicker last year before the vaccines. So far, presentations have been mild this year.

All back together as a community. If you have specific questions about your situation, get in touch with Covid support, who will respond as quickly as possible.

* **HR & Transportation Services - General Questions & Answers**

Everything you need to know about transportation is on the transportation website.

Starlight shuttles run at night after WTA stops running.

Employee bus passes are currently on sale.

To park on G lots on campus, you need a parking pass.

* If you had a parking pass before remote work, just notify that you’d like to reactivate.
* If you didn’t have one, join the wait list, from which new passes will be awarded each Monday.
* Pay by day passes need a specific code; if you have problems, get in touch with the transportation department.

HR:Vaccination numbers are good; about 60 employees have not been in touch. If you haven’t started talking with HR about your vaccination status, please get in touch.

Remote work agreements are due by October 18th if you’re working remotely during the fall quarter.

Working through details about transportation to the NW Labs site; we hope to have all the details in the next HR email.

Number of questions about ventilation have dramatically decreased since FM posted the FAQs and air quality information on their website.

On the dashboard, there will be an ongoing tally of all cases for the quarter and a separate listing for new cases.

If a remote work agreement is initiated by the supervisor, it must be routed to the employee for signing before sending it to HR.

Access to home tests is now somewhat limited. Some are good, some are not, and they’re in fairly high demand. Retail shops that have them in stock have been selling out quickly.

Dashboard data goes in as soon as we get them, but data from SHC comes the day after. Date data was last updated shows on the dashboard.

No personal exemptions have been accepted, only medical or religious exemptions. Previously granted personal exemptions were voided when they were no longer allowed.

Answer on ventilation question in chat.

Testing for people with vaccination exemptions is weekly.

Voluntary testing frequency is up to employee but can be done up to once weekly.

Currently have 63 exemption requests from employees.

As of this morning, had 459 exemption requests from students out of over 15K submissions. Total medical waivers include students in the process of getting vaccinated whose exemptions are temporary.

HR has detailed guidance about what has caused the delay in vaccination.

Can waiver numbers be updated in the dashboard? Considered included that in future dashboards, representing percentage, numbers being reported daily in Western Today.

Have had questions about concerns from vaccinated employees working alongside unvaccinated employees:

* A big reason that everyone is being asked to wear masks indoors is that unvaccinated people are in the community.
* Masks protect both wearer and people around you, and unvaccinated people are at greater risk for severe disease.

If you qualify for a booster shot under CDC guidance, many places are starting to ramp up vaccine access again. Check first with your own providers and then in pharmacies and other sites.

Covid pass was a system began last year to track students’ testing compliance and isolation and quarantine status.

* Pass remains in place to track students requiring mandatory weekly tests.
* Students who have submitted vaccine cards will have green pass all year. Unvaccinated students will remain green as long as their testing is up to date.
* Yellow means overdue on testing, orange is quarantine, red in isolation.
* Blue pass means that no data has been submitted.
* Yellow badge just means a student is overdue for testing, including students enrolled in surveillance testing who are also vaccinated.
  + Students in higher risk areas may have requested weekly testing as well.

Risk reduction offered by masks depends on the quality of the mask. All studies support tight fitting cloth masks or surgical masks.

Who is allowed to request to see badge status?

* SHC is providing information for professors and may also be available to people running in person service or event.
* Should be limited to those accessing official services, events, and classes.
* **Closing comments w/Joyce Lopes**

Thanks to all the panelists for sharing expertise and special shout-out to Chyerl for organizing these sessions.

Next meeting on October 12. Questions not answered during the session will be answered later. Thanks to all.

Results of the opening poll question: How are you feeling today? (115 responses)

* Cautiously Optimistic: 43%
* Meh…: 26%
* Apprehensive: 7%
* Anxious: 8%
* Excited: 5%
* Crappy, boarding on blargh: 6%
* Totally pumped: 5%

Results of the closing poll question: How are you feeling today? (102 responses)

* Cautiously Optimistic: 51%
* Meh…: 16%
* Apprehensive: 10%
* Anxious: 9%
* Excited: 8%
* Crappy, boarding on blargh: 3%
* Totally pumped: 3%

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