https://www.bgdailynews.com/news/wku-updates-quarantine-isolation-rules-for-covid-19/article_97488ff3-2497-54be-8288-8dccec19f991.html

WKU updates quarantine, isolation rules for COVID-19

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Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni discusses the start of a new semester, enrollment, actions the campus is taking towards COVID-19 and vaccinations, reparations for Jonesville and other topics on the balcony of Craig Administration Center on Friday, Aug. 20, 2021. (Grace Ramey/photo@bgdailynews.com)

Grace Ramey

Western Kentucky University will return to in-person classes on time Jan. 18, WKU President Timothy Caboni announced in a campuswide message.

"The rapid spread of COVID-19, especially the Omicron variant, requires that we remain vigilant in our efforts to mitigate spread among the WKU Community," Caboni wrote last week in a memo to WKU faculty and staff.

Caboni said the university's COVID-19 Task Force met to review and finalize plans for the spring semester.

Masking will continue to be the norm at all times on buses and common indoor spaces on campus, including classrooms, hallways, laboratories and elevators, for example.

Any student, faculty or staff member who tests positive or is a close contact for COVID-19 must contact the WKU COVID Assistance Line at 270-745-2019 within four hours of receiving that news. However, close contacts may not be required to quarantine if they're fully vaccinated and have gotten their booster shot.

There have been changes to the university's isolation and quarantine rules in light of updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Particularly of note, the revised protocols shorten the isolation period for positive cases to five days in most instances, followed by masking for an additional five days," Caboni wrote. "Isolation can end after five full days if you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and your other symptoms have improved. Please refer to the CDC's latest isolation and quarantine guidance or contact the WKU COVID Assistance Line."

Also of note, Caboni encouraged the campus community to get their vaccine and booster shot but stopped short of stating the university will require them.

The university previously rolled out its Vaccine Incentive Program, which awarded students with a shot one of five full-tuition scholarships for getting the vaccine, among other prizes for faculty and staff.

"Vaccines and boosters are readily available in our area, including the Graves Gilbert Clinic on campus. The COVID vaccine remains our best defense against the virus. If you are not yet vaccinated or have not obtained a booster shot (if eligible), we strongly encourage you to take this important preventative measure," Caboni wrote.

That said, Caboni asked all members of the university to report or update their vaccination status online at app.wku.edu/vaccine. The form there has now been

updated to allow individuals to submit booster shot information.

Caboni said the university will continue to maintain wku.edu/healthyonthehill with the latest information on WKU operating procedures.

He ended his message by reminding WKU faculty, students and staff to keep on their guard.

"The strategies employed since our return to campus in the fall of 2020 have proven effective, but sustained diligence is required to best protect our Hilltopper Family. The ever-changing nature of the pandemic and the arrival of new variants require continued flexibility and adaptability. As we have done throughout the pandemic, the COVID-19 Task Force and the Department of Environmental Health & Safety will continue to monitor public health guidance and update operational procedures as necessary," Caboni wrote.

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