

From Bryan Garey: Help make spring semester successful and safe for our community

To faculty, staff, and wage employees:

The news over the last couple of weeks of rising COVID-19 cases due to the omicron variant is hard to hear. Every one of us wants the pandemic to end, but the fact is, COVID-19 isn't going away.

However, we know what we need to do to mitigate the spread of the virus and the impact on ourselves, our families, and our community. Your commitment to those mitigation steps, including vaccination, staying home when sick, and continuing to wear masks, led to 94 percent of our employees getting vaccinated in addition to seeing very low numbers of positive cases at Virginia Tech during fall semester. That is teamwork at its finest!

Now, as the spring semester begins and we get ready for students to return, we need every employee to work together again. The first part of the semester may be hard with positive tests on the rise due to the omicron variant, but the university is working to ensure we have a plan in place to minimize impacts on students and each other.

We have also learned a lot about the omicron variant in a short time. While it is more contagious than previous variants, evidence is showing that it is significantly less likely to result in serious disease or death, especially for those who are vaccinated and boosted.

Vaccinations, boosters, and good health guidelines continue to be our best defense against COVID-19. That's why we are asking every employee to do the following to prepare for spring semester:

- Get your booster as soon as you are eligible. Virginia Tech is requiring booster shots within 14 days of eligibility (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html>) for all students and employees. If you are eligible now, please update your vaccination information in the self-reporting form at <https://apps.es.vt.edu/vaccinereporting/>. If you are not eligible yet, please schedule your booster as soon as you are able to do so. As a reminder, Hokie Wellness is hosting two booster clinics on the Blacksburg campus in January. You may also get a booster at one of the Health Department sites at <https://www.nrvroadtowellness.com/where-to-get-vaccinated>, a local pharmacy, or

- find one near you through vaccinefinder.gov.
- Report your booster information once you receive it. Students (https://vtnotify.students.vt.edu/index.php/patient/vaccine_documentation/) and employees (<https://www.hr.vt.edu/resources0/vaccine-reporting.html>) need to upload their updated vaccination record as soon as they receive a booster. Procedures remain in place for students and employees to request medical and religious exemptions. Existing exemptions will be honored. For those with medical concerns about the booster shot, please consult your physician.
- If you feel sick, do not come to work. Notify your supervisor and get tested for COVID-19 where possible. If you have a positive test result, contact reportacase@vt.edu so that Virginia Tech's case management team may help you through your illness with information, guidelines, and support.
- If you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID, get tested. If you are vaccinated and boosted or vaccinated and not yet eligible for a booster and you do not have symptoms associated with COVID-19, you do not need to quarantine but should wear a mask at all times. Unvaccinated people should quarantine for five days. Visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html#quarantine> for more information.
- Continue to wear a mask. With the increase in positive cases, the university continues to require masks for indoor public spaces (<https://ready.vt.edu/public-health-guidelines.html>). With the higher transmissibility of omicron, it is recommended that a better fitting mask, such as a KN95 or equivalent, be worn to improve protection for you and others. More information about masks is available on the CDC website.

Each of us plays an important role in ensuring the health and safety of our community. With every employee following the guidelines outlined above, we will do our part in making the spring semester as successful as fall.

Thank you to our 15,000 employees for all that you do for the Hokie Nation!

Sincerely,

Bryan Garey
Vice President for Human Resources

COVID vaccination booster clinic on Jan. 25

As announced on Dec. 28 (<https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2021/12/president-spring2022-message.html>), all Virginia Tech students and employees are required to get a COVID booster shot within 14 days of eligibility. If you are eligible now, updated vaccination information is due to be reported to the university by Feb. 1.

All individuals aged 18 and older are eligible to receive a COVID booster. If you are at least six months past your first vaccination date for Moderna or Pfizer, or two months past your vaccination date for Johnson & Johnson, get a booster as soon as possible. If you are not eligible yet, please schedule your booster as soon as you are able to do so.

Hokie Wellness and Virginia Tech Emergency Management are partnering with Kroger to offer a booster clinic at the Blacksburg campus at the Rec Sports Fieldhouse, located at 510 Beamer Way, on the following date:

- Tuesday, Jan. 25, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Register for this clinic at <https://sugeni.us/WzLO>; registration is required prior to the clinic.

Clinics are open to all students and employees, including faculty, staff, and wage, who may need the booster.

The majority of boosters available at the clinic will be Pfizer; some Moderna will be available. Students or employees may request their preferred booster the day of the clinic and Kroger will accommodate if possible.

Once you have received your booster, report your information:

- Students: For instructions and to report booster information, visit https://students.vt.edu/vaccination_reporting.html
- Employees: For instructions and to report booster information, visit <https://www.hr.vt.edu/resources0/vaccine-reporting.html>

Procedures remain in place for students (<https://ready.vt.edu/vaccinations/student-vaccine-faqs.html>) and employees (<https://oea.vt.edu/ada-accessibility-services/resources/covid-vaccine-exemptions.html>) to request medical and religious exemptions. Existing exemptions will be honored. For those with medical concerns about the booster shot, please consult your physician.

If you are unable to attend the clinic above, you may receive a booster through local health departments or at most national pharmacies:

- Employees or students in the New River Valley: Visit the New River Health District's website at <https://www.nrvroadtowellness.com/where-to-get-vaccinated> for upcoming vaccination clinics.
- Employees or students in other parts of Virginia: Visit your local health district office's website.
- Use <https://vaccines.gov> to book a vaccination or booster appointment with a national pharmacy.

Performance Management: Best Practices Training Series

Talent Development and Employee Relations are thrilled to offer a brand new yearlong training series that begins on Jan. 11. This training series covers best practices for the planning, Touchpoints, and evaluation stages of the performance process. By the end of the semester, employees and supervisors will be able to refine performance goals to ensure clear understanding and expectations, establish consistent and ongoing dialogue around performance goals, and create a personal tool to help document progress toward the completion of goals.

Register for the following workshops on PageUp LMS:

- Creating SMART Goals: Jan. 11, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. <https://virginiatech.pageuppeople.com/learning/7100>
- What are Touchpoints?: Feb. 9, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. <https://virginiatech.pageuppeople.com/learning/7101>
- Effective One-on-One Meetings: Mar. 8, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. <https://virginiatech.pageuppeople.com/learning/7102>
- Be a Part of Your Own Success: Apr. 6, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. <https://virginiatech.pageuppeople.com/learning/7103>
- Be a STAR by Journaling: May 3 from 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. <https://virginiatech.pageuppeople.com/learning/7104>

To learn more, visit the Talent Development site at <https://www.hr.vt.edu/talent-development.html>.

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