January 20, 2022

Dear Faculty colleagues,

Thank you for your hard work and effort in launching us into our Spring semester. Though these continue to be trying times, we were able to successfully begin the new semester thanks to your service and dedication.

The majority of classes during these first two weeks have remained in-person. Approximately 25% of courses have been delivered online during that time either because of faculty medical accommodations or the option offered to teach courses online for the first two weeks of the semester, while arrival testing of our entire community was completed.

As the end of this two-week window is quickly approaching and we prepare to return to the classroom beginning Monday (1/24/22), I thought it would be helpful to share a status update as well as some additional information and opportunities you may find useful in safely returning to—or continuing—in-person teaching at this time:

- Positive cases have been linked almost exclusively to social and private settings, per the University’s contact tracing team. As has been the case throughout the pandemic, classrooms transmission appears to be nearly non-existent.

- Our community is highly vaccinated (97%) and the number of individuals who have received their boosters is significant and increasing leading up to the 1/31/22 deadline for all eligible individuals to receive a booster. Specifically, to date more than 1,500 employees and 3,000 students have already uploaded proof of their booster shots. These numbers are quickly increasing as more
individuals, especially students, become eligible for a booster; reminders are sent to upload proof of a booster at Villanova.medicationconnect.com; and numerous individuals receive boosters at our on-campus booster clinics (Click here to register if interested).

- Of those individuals testing positive for COVID-19, nearly all are experiencing mild symptoms with no hospitalizations of which we are aware.

- Villanova’s surveillance testing program will continue in the weeks ahead, providing us an early warning of the prevalence of COVID-19 on campus and allowing us to isolate as appropriate to help reduce the spread. Now that our arrival testing program has ended, we will continue to randomly select faculty, staff, and students to be tested in our surveillance program.

- While reports of difficulty obtaining COVID-19 tests continue to be commonplace, the University invites interested faculty, staff, and students to sign up for surveillance testing on-campus—even if they have not been selected for testing in a given week—by signing up using the same link used for arrival testing (register for testing here).

- Everyone must continue to wear their masks in classroom and laboratory settings as well as in other indoor spaces in academic buildings when not actively eating or drinking. Anecdotal reports are that mask compliance among students, while something that we will continue to reinforce, has increased significantly of late as a result of messages from the President, Human Resources, additional signage, and your own efforts to remind students of this expectation.

- KN95 masks are available from your deans or department chairs. Additional supplies have been ordered. KN95 masks are also available to students at the main desk of the Connelly Center.

- Faculty who test positive have the option while isolating to teach class sessions online or make other arrangements for their class consistent with “Course and Class Regulations” policy in the Faculty Handbook.

- Faculty who have medical conditions that make them high risk should continue to use HR’s medical accommodation’s process to apply to teach their courses online.

I know and understand that there are varying viewpoints on the actions the University should take. Indeed, I am grateful for the opportunity to have heard a variety of perspectives from dozens of faculty, both within and outside of our formal governance mechanisms, as well as those from many staff and students. We continue to do our best to take those perspectives—combined with medical, psychological, and educational expert opinion both on and off campus—about the risks and benefits of a return to in-person education and weigh them against our evolving situation to make what we think are the best decisions for our entire community.

In the end, the decision to serve our students in-person is based on our judgment and belief that Villanova University has a responsibility to deliver on our promise of an in-person learning experience. We also believe we will safely accomplish this while not unduly risking the health of our faculty and staff through the various measures we have in place as well as your continued excellence in and out of the classroom.

Thank you, as always, for all that you do for our students, each other, and Villanova. I am truly proud to serve within such an outstanding faculty community.
Warm regards,

Patrick G. Maggitti, PhD
Provost