



September 13, 2021

Dear Students,

Please pay close attention to this important message.

The purpose of this communication is to provide you with important updates and reminders to our COVID-19 prevention plan. The Bon Secours Mercy Health ministry is experiencing an “alarming increase in the highly contagious Delta variant, which has been shown to cause a viral load 1,000 times higher than previous strains of COVID-19. This means it multiplies quicker in the respiratory tract, making it more transmissible. It may also be contagious earlier. As a ministry, we are seeing an increase in the number of patients with COVID-19. The number of our patients hospitalized with COVID-19 is 13 times higher now than it was at the beginning of July” (Dr. Wael Haidar, Bon Secours Mercy Health Chief Clinical Officer, email communication September 8, 2021).

There are two significant updates that I need to share with you:

- Bon Secours Mercy Health is requiring everyone to wear a medical grade mask in their facilities, unless specified differently in your clinical role for better protection. The College will institute this requirement on our campus effective immediately. The College will provide you with one medical grade mask per week or you may purchase and wear your own.
- The Richmond Market of Bon Secours Mercy Health has made the decision to implement a COVID-19 vaccine requirement for all associates, providers, and students. Market leadership shared that this decision was based on firm belief, grounded in scientific evidence, that the benefits of the vaccine far outweigh any potential risks. The system policy and operational details are being determined at this time. We will share more information with you once we receive it. Currently, we do not have any information on the potential for exemptions to the requirement. To prepare for the requirement, **ALL BSN STUDENTS** need to do **ONE of the following no later than noon on October 1, 2021:**
 - **DOCUMENTATION:** Submit your COVID-19 Vaccine Documentation via CastleBranch. If you are partially vaccinated (one out of two injections), please submit that documentation. If you have already submitted your completed vaccine record, you do not need to provide any further documentation or complete the survey described below.
 - **SURVEY:** If you are not vaccinated and do not intend to be vaccinated or have completed only one of a two vaccine series, log into your student portal, go to Blackboard, return to this document, and click on this link to complete this required survey.

Failure to submit the either the documentation or the survey by the deadline will result in not being able to attend clinical/practicum.



**Bon Secours Memorial
College of Nursing**

Our college campus continues to experience a low number of reported COVID-19 positive tests. This statistic does not happen by accident, your commitment to the health of our community is allowing us the opportunity to deliver the curriculum in the intended fashion so far this semester. Please continue to adhere to the COVID-19 prevention measures by implementing the following:

- If you need to obtain a vaccine, Bon Secours Richmond schedule is provided as an attachment to this letter.
- Do NOT ignore symptoms, if you are experiencing symptoms (fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea) you should report this to your course faculty and to our COVID tracking team. To report symptoms to the COVID-19 tracking team or ask questions/seek guidance, please use this email: response@bsmcon.edu.
- For more information about our COVID-19 prevention strategies and protocols, please visit the College [website](#).
- Follow the reduced capacity instructions in the student lounge and study spaces. Limit time in the student lounge to 20-30 minutes to allow others time and space to eat. Go outside during breaks or lunch, use the picnic space for lunch when possible.
- Clean your classroom and study area before and after use.
- Wear a procedure mask in public areas of the building.
- Practice physical distancing of at least 6 feet from other people whenever possible. Avoid gathering in groups unless it's for established classes and/or meetings. Use video conferencing (i.e.: Zoom, Facetime, etc.) for student meetings, studying or project work.
- Ensure you are up to date on scientific data related to COVID-19, prevention strategies, vaccines and treatments.
- Be kind to patients and with health care professionals. Listen to what people have to say; try to understand another's point of view; and come from a place of love for humankind. Offer education without judgement.

We understand that you may have many questions about the vaccine requirement. We have given you all the information that we have at this time. If you have questions about how this requirement could affect your education, please contact your advisor to discuss your individual concerns. Thank you for continuing to do your part to keep our campus community healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

Dr. Perkins

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