



1/7/22

Dear BUA students and families,

We are back. Getting this community back together in person has required sacrifices and extra effort from students, families, faculty, and staff. But I'm thrilled that we had two days of in-person learning and community time – topped off by one of the prettiest snow days I can remember.

I am writing with some important updates and action items.

Saturday Test Required for Students Who did Not Test Thursday

As you know, we are fortunate to have access to testing at BU and, for many months, have had a twice-weekly testing requirement. We asked all students who were on campus to test yesterday (Thursday), which would have been their second test of the week. **Any student who did not test Thursday but who plans to attend classes on Monday must test tomorrow (Saturday) in the first half of the day** so that they can have their results in hand before school on Monday. Students who do not will be asked to stay home until they have a negative BU test and are invited to join classes by Zoom (please email academy@bu.edu by 8:00 a.m. to request links).

Actively Checking for Test Results

In the past, many of us were in the routine of waiting for an email from Healthway alerting us to a message in the Patient Connect. Those emails have in some cases been significantly delayed or have not arrived. Students, please **actively check your Patient Connect portal for test results**, even during the school day. Turnaround time can be as fast as 8 hours but as long as 24 hours.

Positive Tests Returning from Break

Since I last wrote, we learned of four more students who tested positive through BU testing (three on Tuesday before we returned, one yesterday) and three others who tested positive through at-home tests before returning. We have implemented our normal protocols in response. That puts the **total number of students who reported positive test results in recent days at 25 – roughly 11% of our student population**, plus two staff members. That is sobering, although not surprising given the confluence of omicron, winter break activities, and the broad testing requirement before returning from break. It also confirms that we are not immune from the omicron wave.

Now more than ever, I am grateful for BU's testing infrastructure and our students' compliance with the test-before-returning regimen. We will know much more in the coming days and weeks, but we are hopeful that as we isolate those community members who contracted COVID over the break, we can minimize spread at BUA and that positive test numbers come down significantly. Given what we know about omicron, we are realistic; there will very likely be more positive tests. The goal of our COVID response has never been zero positive tests. We are confident in the testing system and the overlapping protections we have in place on campus – all designed to keep us learning in person. And we will closely monitor the situation and make alternate plans as needed.

For the immediate future, we will plan to provide a weekly update on positive cases and other changes, rather than same-day announcements of positive tests.

Extra Caution outside of School

To the extent that you can, it would be helpful if families would **take extra precautions** – at least until this wave passes. This might include limiting time with people outside the household, avoiding indoor gatherings outside the home, curtailing weekend travel plans, etc. We are not implementing rules, just asking for your partnership as we work hard to keep in-person learning in place.

Booster Requirement and Availability

The [FDA](#) and [CDC](#) have recently **approved boosters for anybody over 12 years old and shortened the time from the second shot to the booster to five months** (from six). That means that many of our students are now eligible to receive a booster.

In line with BU's policies, BUA will now **require all eligible students to receive a booster and upload evidence of that booster by February 4 or as soon after that as eligibility allows**. For instructions on how to upload proof of a booster, please see the relevant section on the [BUA COVID Protocols](#) page.

As we do for other required vaccinations, we will accommodate medical and religious exemptions to this policy.

Returning to School after a Positive Test

As always, students who test positive – at home or at BU – should stay home and notify the BU Healthway team at 617-353-0550. Healthway will clarify next steps. We understand that it has been difficult, in some cases, to contact a Healthway staff member as that group copes with increased demand. If you are having difficulty, please contact us at academy@bu.edu, and we can try to intervene on your behalf.

A minor but important update to requirements before returning after a positive test. Community members who test positive may return to classes after five days of a positive test if (1) they are symptom free, (2) have received a negative COVID test from an at-home antigen test, and (3) have received a clearance email from Healthway. Families in this situation who do not have access to an at-home test should contact us at academy@bu.edu. We may be able to provide one for you. If not, we require that the student continue the isolation for seven days (two more) before returning.

Self-Scheduling for Symptomatic Testing Now Available

Symptomatic students now have the option to directly schedule same-day tests – without talking to Healthway first – at the symptomatic testing center in the [Health Services Annex](#). They schedule those tests using the same portal they use to schedule asymptomatic tests. Symptomatic test results are generally returned the same day.

As a reminder, if a student is experiencing symptoms, we ask that:

- the student stay home
- the family contact the front desk to report the absence by 8:00 a.m by calling 617-353-9000 or emailing academy@bu.edu
- the student or family call Healthway (617-353-0550) to discuss symptoms, testing, and other next steps with a nurse **OR** the student directly schedule a COVID test at the symptomatic testing center (see above) and not return to school until receiving a negative test result and being asymptomatic

If you have any questions, please reach out to us at academy@bu.edu. The protocols, we realize, are shifting as we try to respond to changing circumstances and public health guidance. We are here for you and happy to talk.

Warmly,

Chris Kolovos