



Dear BUA students and families,

I am writing to confirm that we will be **returning to in-person learning tomorrow as planned**. We have made this decision – as we have all along – in collaboration with our partners at BU and our BUA parent health advisors, and with the well-being of our students, staff, and families at the forefront of our minds.

Science is beginning to reveal more about this new variant. There are strong indications that it is significantly more infectious than alpha and delta. The early research is also showing that omicron seems to reside in the upper respiratory system and is significantly less likely to affect the lungs, which may partially explain why there are far fewer hospitalizations and cases of serious illness. As you'll see below, a number of positive cases have been reported in the BUA community in the last several weeks, including from the testing at BU yesterday and today. This is not a surprise, given what we are learning about omicron. Our experience over the past year and a half gives us confidence in our ability to weather this new, challenging phase of the pandemic. The combination of BU's testing infrastructure, our protocols, our vaccination rate, and the remarkable partnership of our students and families – committed to doing everything you can to keep us learning in person – is a powerful set of overlapping protections. That said, we will track the data carefully, adjust as we go, and keep you informed.

The goal of our COVID response has never been zero positive tests. We have aimed to maximize in-person learning and community engagement – knowing how important those things are to student mental health, growth, and learning – while also keeping our students and staff (and their families) physically safe. We believe that a return to in-person learning tomorrow, with enhanced testing and other protocols, achieves those goals.

A few important notes before we return.

Negative Test Result Required before Return

Nearly all of our students tested Monday or early this morning (Tuesday). I'm so proud of the way this community responded to this late-breaking requirement – thank you. Most have received test results at this point. We ask that students **only come to BUA tomorrow if they have received a negative test result**. For students who come to school without a negative test result, we will ask you to take a test at BU (if you haven't already) and go home for the day.

If You Did Not Receive a Result

Students, if you have not received an email linking to your results, please **log in to Patient Connect and check for messages**. We are receiving quite a few reports of results being posted without the traditional email notification.

If you do not see a test result in Patient Connect, please **email us at academy@bu.edu**. In some cases, we can check with the lab and let you know the status of your test. In other cases, the result is not in yet. In that circumstance, we ask you to simply stay home and join your classes by Zoom until you receive that test result.

Joining Classes by Zoom

For any students who will be learning from home tomorrow because you either tested positive and are feeling well enough to attend, do not yet have a negative test result, or for another COVID-related reason, please **email us at academy@bu.edu before 8:00 a.m. to let us know you'd like to join your classes by Zoom**. Dr. White will follow up with the Zoom links you need. If you are feeling too sick to join by Zoom, please rest up! Your teachers will work with you to get you caught up.

Positive Tests

From the beginning of the pandemic, we promised transparency about positive cases in our community, within the bounds of privacy. The number of **positive tests in our community** in the past several weeks attests to the increased transmissibility of omicron. Nearly every student and staff member took a test at BU yesterday or this morning, and results are in for the great majority of those tests. To date, eight students and one staff member have tested positive; they will follow the isolation protocols below under the direction of the staff at BU Healthway. Five more students and one staff member reported testing positive through an at-home test over break and will miss at least one day on campus this week. Five additional students tested positive with at-home tests earlier in the break but will be cleared to return for tomorrow. Many of these members of our community are asymptomatic, with the others experiencing mild symptoms. I know you join me in wishing them and their families well.

We will send an update at the end of the week should there be any additional reported positive tests.

Update to Isolation Protocols

The [CDC recently recommended](#) shortening the isolation period for those who test positive to five days. BUA will follow suit, moving to a **five-day isolation period**, along with the University and in line with guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. But we will add **two additional pieces**. Community members who test positive may return to classes after five days of a positive test if (1) they are symptom free and (2) have received a negative COVID test from an at-home antigen test. Families in this situation who do not have access to an at-home test should contact us at academy@bu.edu.

As always, students who test positive – at home or at BU – should stay home and notify the Healthway team at 617-353-0550. Healthway will clarify next steps.

Update to Close Contact Rules

In response to the increased transmissibility of omicron, we are making a small update to our close contact rules. We will continue with the current protocol: asymptomatic fully vaccinated close contacts are exempt from the quarantine requirement. We will **now require that close contacts have a negative test result before returning to class** (at-home rapid test or BU PCR tests are ok) and then take tests at BU for eight consecutive days upon returning (excluding weekends), after which they can return to their regular testing schedule.

Athletics and Lunch

Sports are a central part of our community. I think about what Fall Fest and the soccer championship meant for us this year. We plan to keep up athletics as much as we can, but have decided to **forego interscholastic competition for this week** and will assess as we go. My hope is that we are back on the sidelines cheering on our teams next week.

The research tells us that meals are the time when there is the highest risk of transmission. Students, please distance as you can during meals and only take off your mask when eating. We will be setting up some large **tables and chairs spaced out in the gym just for lunch time**, which should help create some distance between groups while still allowing you to sit with your friends. This will not impact athletics, as we will strike the tables and chairs after meals.

What Can You Do?

Many of you students have asked what you can do in this new phase of the pandemic. Three things:

First, **stay at home if you are experiencing symptoms**. We know you feel pressure not to miss classes and want to be with your friends. We will continue to offer Zoom access to classes, and teachers will be flexible if you miss class. But it is critical that you err on the side of caution with symptoms.

Second, **wear a well-fitting mask**. Here's a link to [BU's mask guidance](#). Note the discussion about fit and about the types of masks that are most effective.

Finally, take care of one another. Even if you are feeling fine and have no brush with COVID, this is a stressful time. Keep showing one another the kindness, respect, and love that define this community. And if you need help, ask.

If you have any questions, please reach out to us at academy@bu.edu.

This is not a circumstance any of us ever wished for. But I am so grateful to be going through this with all of you.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christopher Kolovos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Christopher" and last name "Kolovos" clearly legible.

Chris Kolovos
Head of School