

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

Teaching, Learning & Research Documents

Teaching, Learning & Research Records

10-4-2021

COVID-19_Maine Campus_COVID's still here. Why isn't our strategy?

Emma Vannorsdall

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/c19_teach_doc



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [History Commons](#), and the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Teaching, Learning & Research Documents by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.



UMaine hosts second Socialist and Marxist Studies lecture

NFL MVP front runners (<https://mainecampus.com/2021/10/nfl-mvp-front-runners>)



COVID's still here. Why isn't our strategy?

Home (<https://mainecampus.com>) / Opinion (<https://mainecampus.com/category/opinion/>) / Editorials (<https://mainecampus.com/category/opinion/edits/>) / COVID's still here. Why isn't our strategy?



Photo by David Jakacky



Emma Vannorsdall (<https://mainecampus.com/author/evannorsdall/>)

📄 Editorials (<https://mainecampus.com/category/opinion/edits/>), Opinion (<https://mainecampus.com/category/opinion/>) | 🕒 October 4, 2021

◀ 1

In March of 2020, students received an email telling us that all students would be sent home and have to transition to remote education. The following year forced us to adjust to virtual learning and cope with the disarray caused by the pandemic. Last year, the university made great strides in helping us return to in-person learning while prioritizing our health and safety. We had mask mandates, weekly testing, quarantine dorms, contact tracing and travel restrictions. Academically, we had hybrid zoom classes, reading days, options to take classes virtually if needed and more flexible attendance policies.

These practices effectively controlled our COVID-19 cases and protected our community last year, but the pandemic is not over as of the Fall 2021 semester. COVID-19 is still here, but our COVID-19 strategy is not.

The rules are vague, the communication is lacking and students are beginning to express their concerns about the school's insufficient COVID-19 strategy. While the vaccine mandate requires that all students are fully vaccinated in order to protect the community and reduce the virus' transmission, students are still getting sick, and the measures previously taken to help us are no longer in place.

Last year, Knox Hall was reserved as a quarantine dorm. Students who tested positive for COVID-19 or had known to be exposed were required to move into the hall and quarantine for ten days. This year, as sent in an email titled "Covid information for residents," the university announced its new policy. "We will ask most students to return home for their isolation period. We have very little space available for on campus isolation." The University of Maine has a large out-of-state population, and unfortunately, traveling home isn't as easy for some students as the university has implied.

Furthermore, there's little clarity on how students will continue to attend classes, virtually or not at all, should they test positive or be exposed. "Pack what you will need for 10 days in isolation," the email continues. "Don't forget things like academic coursework, chargers and medications you'll need!" This language undermines the significant implications a ten-day quarantine has for many students and provides little logistical support.

There is additional concern as the newest Delta variant [spreads faster](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/delta-variant.html?s_cid=11512:coronavirus%20delta%20plus%20variant:sem.ga:p:RG:GM:gen:PTN:FY21) (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/delta-variant.html?s_cid=11512:coronavirus%20delta%20plus%20variant:sem.ga:p:RG:GM:gen:PTN:FY21), further complicating the housing situation on campus. At the least, we need an improved contact tracing system that can keep up with the high transmission rate. Currently, the school reports [44 known cases](https://www.maine.edu/together/2021/10/01/together-for-maine-daily-briefing-and-covid-19-data-update-10-01-21/) (<https://www.maine.edu/together/2021/10/01/together-for-maine-daily-briefing-and-covid-19-data-update-10-01-21/>) at UMaine, which it identified through the "UMS asymptomatic screening and verified self-reports of university students, faculty and staff from independent testing." Our COVID-19 response is now reliant on everyone self-reporting, but currently there is little incentive to do so.

Part of this arises from confusion regarding absence policies in class. Students have experienced frustration due to many teachers' strict attendance requirements. With no Zoom option required for classes many continue to attend classes even when they present symptoms. The mentality is to not get tested if you feel sick, due to concerns surrounding missed classes and falling behind in schoolwork.

A way the university could alleviate this issue is by reinstating the pass/fail option and offering Zoom classes for students who choose to isolate.

While we may have returned to in-person classes, we're still combatting issues we faced last year. Students are still getting sick, we're still wearing masks and we still face an uncertain future. For example, we were told the mask mandate would be implemented until Sept. 30. Recently, that has been updated until late October.

Although based on hopeful testing outcomes, by frequently changing mandates, students are faced with unstable expectations regarding UMaine's broad COVID-19 strategy. Telling students at the beginning of the semester that UMaine will uphold the mask mandate for the entire semester would have reduced worries over the university's concern for student safety.

While the university holds the primary responsibility for their COVID-19 strategy, it should be noted that students also need to adjust our attitude. Students continue to gather at bars, sporting events and large gatherings even when they feel sick. We should discourage each other from going out when sick and encourage reporting our symptoms and getting tested.

The future of our COVID-19 response needs an increased effort by both students and the school. UMaine should consider reinstating the pass/fail option and creating more convenient options for quarantining. We also need a clear agenda on the future COVID-19 response and what to anticipate for next semester. Ideally, students should be allowed to participate in all classes via Zoom should they test positive for COVID-19 or choose to isolate due to known exposure.

While requiring the vaccine was a huge step toward protecting our student body, these additional measures would provide a support system that encourages students to get tested and to refrain from attending classes when sick.



RELATED POSTS

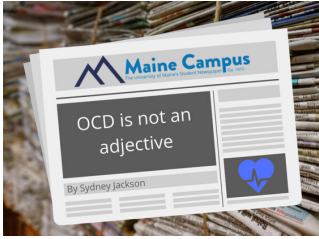


Photo by David Jakacky (https://mainecampus.com/2021/10/ocd-is-not-an-adjective/)

OCD IS NOT AN ADJECTIVE (HTTPS://MAINECAMPUS.COM/2021/10/OC-D-IS-NOT-AN-ADJECTIVE/)

Graphic by Logan Swift. (https://mainecampus.com/2021/10/horoscopes-10-25-to-10-31/)

HOROSCOPES 10.25 TO 10.31 (HTTPS://MAINECAMPUS.COM/2021/10/HOROSCOPES-10-25-TO-10-31/)

Photo by David Jakacky (https://mainecampus.com/2021/10/the-dirty-truth-about-clean-living/)

THE DIRTY TRUTH ABOUT CLEAN... (HTTPS://MAINECAMPUS.COM/2021/10/THE-DIRTY-TRUTH-ABOUT-CLEAN-LIVING/)

Photo by David Jakacky (https://mainecampus.com/2021/10/the-lasting-effects-of-covid-19-college-students-struggle-with-returning-to-in-person-education/)

THE LASTING EFFECTS OF COVID-19 MORE THAN JUST STUDENTS-STRUGGLE-WITH-RETURNING-TO-IN-PERSON-EDUCATION/)



Photo by (https://r than-just universit secondar

MORE T (HTTPS://MAINECAMPUS.COM/2021/10/THE-LASTING-EFFECTS-OF-COVID-19-COLLEGI-STUDENTS-STRUGGLE-WITH-RETURNING-TO-IN-PERSON-EDUCATION/) SECONI

ALSO ON THE MAINECAMPUS

- Articles: Greek Life Spotlight: Tau Kappa Epsilon ...; Orono is a college town, so why ...; UMaine hosts second Socialist and ...; #YouMaine: Transfer student finds her ...; Editorial: For graduates starting a ...

What do you think?

1 Response



- Upvote
- Funny
- Love
- Surprised
- Angry
- Sad

The MaineCampus Comment Policy

Please read our Comment Policy before commenting.



0 Comments The MaineCampus Disqus' Privacy Policy

Login

Favorite Tweet Share

Sort by Best



Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS

Name

Be the first to comment.

Subscribe Add Disqus to your site Add Disqus Do Not Sell My Data



Maine Campus

5738 Memorial Union, Room 131
Orono, Maine 04469-5738

207-581-1273
info@mainecampus.com

Recent Posts

Red Sox playoff run comes to an end at the hands of the Astros (<https://mainecampus.com/2021/10/red-sox-fall-valiantly-to-astros-after-postseason-run/>)

UMaine hosts second Socialist and Marxist Studies lecture (<https://mainecampus.com/2021/10/umaine-hosts-second-socialist-and-marxist-studies-lecture/>)

Categories

Select Category



© Copyright 2017-2019. Maine Campus. All Rights Reserved.



[Credits \(https://mainecampus.com/credits/\)](https://mainecampus.com/credits/) [Terms of Use \(https://mainecampus.com/tou/\)](https://mainecampus.com/tou/) [Archives \(https://mainecampus.com/archives/\)](https://mainecampus.com/archives/)

