Approved Absence Notification Protocol Update

Provost at WCU <PROVOST@wcupa.edu>
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Dear Faculty:

Thank you for your patience as we work to refine the university’s approved absence notification protocols. This is especially important as the university seeks to manage the increased need for such notifications within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Effective yesterday, September 27th 2021, the following process will be utilized to notify faculty of a student’s confirmed acute illness that qualifies as a university-approved absence:*

1. Report of acute illness is received by the university.
2. Student Health Services confirms acute illness (data now included in the dashboard) and issues directive to begin isolation.
3. The Office of Student Assistance issues an e-mail notice to faculty member that their student is suffering from an acute illness and is on a university-approved absence. The student will also receive a copy of the notice.
4. Testing and Case Coordinator monitors student compliance with clearance criteria for the respective illness.
5. Once student has met all criteria for clearance, Student Health Services provides an electronic version of a release letter to the student’s Student Health web portal allowing the student to return to campus (student removed from dashboard as an “active case”).
6. Student provides the release letter to their faculty as proof they can a) return to class and b) that the absence must be considered university-approved, which means the student must be allowed to make up any graded assignments, including tests and exams, they may have missed. Additionally, the student cannot be penalized for this absence, including any reductions in points that may be provided for in a professor’s attendance policy.

Relatedly, this e-mail also provides faculty with a reminder of their ability to provide the university with information about a student’s self-reporting of their COVID-19 status. *This form should also be used to report a student who has contacted you to indicate they are experiencing “COVID-19” symptoms.* In addition to filling out this form, faculty are encouraged to remind students who are indicating they are experiencing “COVID-19” symptoms of the availability of testing and to strongly encourage the student to avail themselves of testing before returning to class. In both cases, Student Health Services will contact the student for appropriate follow-up.

*Information about testing can be found here: https://ramconnect.wcupa.edu/events?topic_tags=4870678*

*Please note that wait times have been averaging approximately ~20 minutes and results are e-mailed generally within an hour:*

*COVID-19 Reporting form can be accessed here:*

https://wcupa.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0fBJTuWouB3tlDo

While some faculty members may have concerns about reporting information to the university, we cannot stress the importance and need for this data with respect to understanding the presence of COVID-19 on campus. *If faculty are not reporting this information (which allows the university to seek confirmation) and the student does not self-report, then we do not have a way to include the data on the university’s COVID-19 Dashboard.* One way to assist the university with this is by not allowing a student who has
indicated that they have tested positive to return to class without the release letter described above, and not allow a student to make up graded assignments missed while they were out of class unless they present a release letter from Student Health Services. We want to assure faculty that we only use the information to protect the campus community and provide students with information about how to comply with the university’s Student Community Agreement.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, we understand the concern faculty have regarding knowing their own COVID-19 status. To that end, the university offers unlimited free testing for its employees at our testing site in Aslpundh Hall – Green Room, which now has a separate entrance for employees through the Philips Memorial Hall doors leading to the information desk. Employees may use this entrance until 4:30pm and are able to use the side entrance until 5pm. Any faculty seeking the COVID-19 vaccine may also sign up for an appointment during the weekly clinic offered. Because testing and vaccination site hours may vary due to special events, employees are encouraged to confirm each day’s hours here: https://ramconnect.wcupa.edu/events?topic_tags=4870678.

Sincerely,

Jeffery L. Osgood, Jr. PhD
Deputy Provost & Vice President for Academic Operations

Tony Delgado, EdD
Associate Vice President for Student Affairs
Testing Notification Protocol

The following protocol is for a student who tests positive for COVID 19 through either of our campus testing systems (Student Health or our third-party vendor) or is presumed positive during regular business hours:

1) The Testing and Case (T&C) Coordinator will call the student and send a secured message via their student portal with the directive to isolate.

2) During the initial call, the T&C Coordinator will inquire about any breaks in campus health protocols (i.e., not wearing a mask in enclosed spaces and or having sustained close contact for 15 minutes or longer within a 24-hour period). Individuals identified to have had true exposure with this student will be sent information to monitor their signs and symptoms, quarantine if necessary, or access testing.

3) The T&C Coordinator will ensure isolation and/or quarantine dates are set for the student accordingly. For students residing on campus, the T&C Coordinator will work with housing on “return-to-campus” dates.

4) Students will automatically receive a daily COVID 19 screening survey to assess symptoms and quality of health.

5) Once the student has met all criteria for clearance of COVID 19, the T&C Coordinator will provide a release letter to the student informing them of their ability to return to campus.

6) Faculty are only required to assist students with making up missed instruction and graded assignments when presented with the release letter.