

CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

Connecticut College Goes Remote Due to COVID Cases

By LeAnne Gendreau and Siobhan McGill • Published September 8, 2021 • Updated on September 9, 2021 at 7:39 am



Classes at Connecticut College will be remote for at least a week due to an increase in cases of COVID-19.

Classes at Connecticut College will be remote and students are in what the school is calling cautionary quarantine after dozens of students tested positive for COVID-19.

The dean of students, Victor Arcelus, notified the school community that 20 students who had symptoms tested positive on Monday and contact tracing revealed that students who had contracted the virus had been socializing in cars, in friends' rooms or apartments, at parties or in bars without wearing a mask.

"If COVID is in the room when students are socializing, and if they are not wearing their masks, that can lead to increased spread. Based on the contact tracing that we have done - we get the sense that this is how it spread to as many people as it did," Arcelus said.

On Tuesday morning, another 34 students tested positive and were being moved to isolation housing.

Because of the rise in cases, the school is now in what it calls "Alert Level 3-Orange" and Connecticut College is shifting the way campus operates for a week to 10 days to limit the spread and monitor test results.

Arcelus said the school was prepared to respond and will hopefully get back to normal operations as quickly as possible.

As of Tuesday, 68 Connecticut College students and two employees have tested positive for COVID 19 since Aug. 23. The total positivity rate is 1.11%.

The weekly report for COVID cases shows 57 students testing positive out of 951 tests, which is a positivity rate of 5.99%.

Connecticut College students were required to get vaccinated before returning to campus and very few were exempt. According to a spokesperson for the college, about 98 percent to 99 percent of the student body is fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Arcelus said most of the students who tested positive this week were vaccinated and the cases are a direct result of not following masking protocols.

The state tracks vaccine breakthrough cases. As of last week, about 8,000 breakthrough cases had been confirmed in Connecticut which is about .38% of the fully vaccinated population.

"I know that it sounds like it shouldn't be happening, but it is not unexpected by any means," Dr. Paulo Verardi, a professor of virology and vaccinology at the University of Connecticut, said.

Verardi stressed that vaccines protect against severe disease, but to prevent infection, masks are still critical. Especially as the more contagious delta variant continues to spread in Connecticut.

"What we have to focus on is we have to try to break the cycles of transmission as much as possible," said Verardi.

Connecticut College credits its twice-weekly testing requirement with catching this outbreak early and the students will remain under the cautionary quarantine for at least another week.

"I hope people on campus really think more carefully about their actions and when they are wearing masks," Jake Upton, a senior at the Connecticut College, said.

What Alert Level 3-Orange Status at Connecticut College Means

That means that students can only go into their residence hall and can only be on their floor in the building. Students can only be in their room or apartment with roommates and apartment-mates and friends cannot visit in rooms.

Students are allowed to socialize with a maximum of three students outside, socially distanced and wearing masks.

Students shouldn't go into the community unless it is urgent and must not have other students or visitors to their off-campus property.

Students must receive approval from their class dean to leave campus to attend to urgent matters in New London County.

If students need to leave campus to attend to urgent matters beyond New London County, they must receive approval from their class dean.

Essential staff will be on campus to manage dining operations, campus safety and other critical functions. Non-essential staff who are able to work remotely will be allowed to choose to do so, or, report to work as scheduled on campus.

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