

## **Bennington College**

### **COVID-19 and the Bennington Community**

Bennington College is not only an academic home to students from around the world—it is also an active member of this Vermont community, a critical employer to residents from Bennington and the surrounding towns, and a partner to local businesses and organizations. The safety and well-being of these communities were a principal consideration in the design of our COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. The following is an overview of the College's comprehensive strategy for ensuring that exposure to COVID-19 is minimized, that out-of-state guests follow Vermont travel restrictions, and that the health of everyone on campus is closely monitored for the good of this community.

#### **Restrictions on Travel**

Student arrival to campus will begin the third week in August and will be staggered to allow for COVID-19 testing and physical distancing during move-in. We anticipate that roughly two thirds of total campus housing capacity will be occupied in the fall, with the remaining students studying remotely. Any student who leaves campus to visit a [high caseload area](#) outside the state will not be permitted to return this term, instead finishing their course load via remote learning. Students are advised to limit their off-campus travel and to follow all safety guidelines outlined in the Commitment to Shared Responsibility (see below).

#### **Comprehensive Testing**

Every Bennington student, faculty, and staff member on campus will be tested for COVID-19. Students who reside outside of Vermont in [places with high caseloads](#), as identified by the State of Vermont, will have a test within 48 hours of arrival and a second test after the seventh day of their quarantine. All other students will be tested seven days after their arrival to campus.

#### **Ongoing Prevention and Containment**

All students, faculty, and staff will be required to self-screen daily to confirm that their temperature does not exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit and that they are free of other symptoms associated with COVID-19. Anyone who develops a fever above 100 degrees and/or becomes symptomatic will be tested and required to self-isolate while awaiting test results (we have reserved 5% of campus housing for quarantine use). Students who test positive will need to remain in a designated isolation campus facility until they are cleared to return to their house community by health officials. Faculty and staff who test positive will quarantine off-campus. All contact tracing for positive cases on campus will be conducted by the Vermont Department of Health. We will provide transparent reporting on our website on the status of new cases.

## **Reimagined Campus Spaces**

Every physical space on campus has been reimagined in accordance with state distancing guidelines. In practice, this means classes will be held in larger rooms, with more space between each person; common areas have been dramatically changed to prevent crowding; students will reside in single-occupancy rooms whenever possible; and one-on-one advisory meetings with students will happen remotely or outside of faculty offices. The on-campus faculty and staff population has been calibrated to comply with social distancing and capacity requirements; it is designed to be flexible and adaptive as needs change.

## **Visitors from the Community**

Members of the local community are allowed in campus outdoor spaces and walking trails, but all campus buildings—including the Usdan Art Gallery, Commons Dining Hall, and Crossett Library—are closed to the public. Before coming to campus, local visitors are asked to observe recommended social distancing guidelines, to wear a mask at all times, and to check that their temperature is within a range that does not exceed 100°F and that they do not have COVID-19 symptoms. Students are not permitted to host visitors on campus.

## **A Promise to One Another**

Every student, faculty, and staff member returning to campus in the fall is required to sign a [Commitment of Shared Responsibility](#) (CSR). The CSR requires adherence to the State of Vermont's [Safe and Healthy Return to Campus: Mandatory Guidance for College and University Campus Learning](#), as well as Bennington College's additional requirements for mask-wearing, physical distancing, health screening, travel restrictions, and more. Anyone who refuses to sign the CSR will not be permitted on campus.

## **New Distance Learning Opportunities**

The necessary shift to remote learning accelerated the College's ongoing plans to reach more learners locally, regionally, and around the world. As such, Bennington College recently launched [Bennington+](#), a suite of courses for learners at every stage of their academic lives. Initial offerings includes [Bennington Unbound](#), new creative and critical writing courses offered by renowned faculty members of the Bennington Writing Seminars; courses on urgent social and environmental issues offered by faculty at the [Center for the Advancement of Public Action \(CAPA\)](#); and greater access to a range of courses across the broader Bennington undergraduate curriculum. For now, all courses are offered remotely. Vermont high school juniors and seniors may be eligible for dual enrollment reimbursement.

*Bennington College's COVID-19 Preparedness Plan is designed to be flexible and responsive to changing public health needs to support the central goal of safely reopening campus and protecting the health and well-being of the broader community.*