

STERLING COLLEGE SAFE AND HEALTHY RETURN TO CAMPUS

Updated October 20, 2020

(Please note that this document is updated frequently to reflect changes in policy and procedures related to the COVID-19 pandemic).

Higher education institutions are an important component of Vermont's economy, workforce development system, culture and vitality. Sterling College, in partnership with the state of Vermont, aims to make Vermont a safe place to attend college during the COVID-19 public health emergency by establishing strict safety protocols. Employees and students must comply with this guidance to protect their own health and safety, as well as that of the greater Sterling Community in both Craftsbury and New Castle, KY. Those who do not observe these stipulations risk disciplinary action, which is outlined in our [COVID Handbook](#).

These protocols are in addition to, and not a substitute for, the State of Vermont's existing Work Safe Guidance. In the event these two documents contradict one another, this document supersedes the Work Safe Guidance. These guidelines aim to minimize the likelihood of an outbreak, and—if one occurs—reduce its severity.

This document was created in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Health, the Vermont Department of Public Service, the Vermont Agency of Education and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD).

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- I. **Decrease risk of individuals infected with COVID-19 from entering the campus through effective public health prevention.**
 - a. **Health Safety Contract:** All students, faculty and staff shall sign the Commitment to Shared Responsibility ([Student version](#) & [Employee version](#)).
 - b. **Quarantine:** In order to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, staff and the community, Sterling College has implemented strict quarantine procedures for students returning to campus at the beginning of semesters, after breaks, or after out-of-state travel by students to places requiring quarantine using one of the following health protocols:
 - **Home state:** If traveling to Vermont in a private vehicle without making a prolonged stop, individual must quarantine at home for 14 days immediately prior to traveling to Vermont (individuals may

complete a shorter quarantine if they receive a negative COVID-19 test after day 7 in their home state and travel directly to Vermont without breaking the quarantine); OR

- ***In Vermont after public or multi-family transit to Vermont:*** If traveling to Vermont with people from multiple households, via bus, rail or commercial airlines, individuals must quarantine for 14 days upon arrival to Vermont (after day 7 the individual may get a COVID-19 test and upon receiving a negative result, end their quarantine); OR
- ***Non-quarantine counties:*** Students traveling to Vermont from a non-quarantine county as identified by the [Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development](#) as of three weeks before in-person instruction begins on the campus, who travel in a private vehicle without making a prolonged stop, may arrive without completing a quarantine.

Students who quarantine in Vermont may do so in one of the following locations:

- At a private residence in Vermont, including the student's Vermont apartment (for off-campus students); OR
- At a lodging property in Vermont including hotels and short-term rentals; OR
- A residence hall, under the following conditions: Students will be required to quarantine in a designated location on campus and all meals will be provided. The quarantine shall be 7 days and will end if a negative COVID-19 test result is received after day 7. In order to protect students and others, students in quarantine must follow current State of Vermont quarantine requirements. Residence hall quarantine will be available to students with residence hall contracts.

For students who have a positive test on day 7, isolation procedures and contact tracing will be immediately initiated as in section 3.

- c. **Health Screenings:** All students must complete a health screening upon campus arrival. This screening survey shall require an individual to verify that they have had no symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea). A temperature check will be conducted upon Arrival by a Sterling employee with a non-contact temperature check.

- d. **Reduce Visitors:** Students may have two guests with them on move-in day. The guest must meet State of Vermont travel restrictions OR conduct a contactless drop off and quarantine during their visit to Vermont. Colleges should limit outside visitors and have no visitors to residence halls.

During a contactless drop off, guests may not enter any college facilities, must limit activities outside the car to helping the student unload at the curb, and must avoid contact (within 6 feet of any individual) with anyone outside their household. Those guests unable to complete a day trip to conduct the drop off may stay at a lodging property only if they quarantine at that property for the duration of the stay. Quarantine means they do not leave the room or house in which they are staying and make no trips to the grocery store, restaurants or any other places where they may come in contact with others. Using lodging property amenities such as pools, spas, gyms, recreation equipment or other general use facilities is also not permitted. If a guest traveling from a quarantine county stays with family or friends at a private residence, the individuals hosting that guest must quarantine upon the guests departure.

Sterling College will limit other outside visitors and have no visitors to residence halls, unless authorized by the Dean of Student Life (for emergency, medical, or facility needs).

- e. **Testing:** Sterling College will ensure that all students (no matter where they come from) will undergo a COVID-19 testing protocol arranged for by the institution upon a student's return to campus for the semester, upon return from a break, or if they travel out of state to places requiring quarantine by the state's travel requirements. This testing requirement does not eliminate the need for quarantine. Throughout the semester, Sterling College will conduct symptomatic and contact tracing COVID-19 testing for students.
- i. All students (including Vermonters) will receive a 'day zero' test conducted within 48 hours of arrival at campus.
 - ii. All students (including Vermonters) must have a second test done at day 7.

Sterling College requires all employees be tested for COVID-19 by the start of the 2020-21 Academic Year. Subsequent testing will only be required for symptomatic and contact tracing instances.

- f. **Travel:** All institutional out-of-state travel shall be suspended except with institutional leadership permission. Students and employees should only

travel to and from non-quarantine counties pursuant to the [ACCD travel policy](#) or plan to quarantine. Upon return from any out-of-state travel, whether institutional or personal, students and employees will follow ACCD travel quarantine policy.

- g. Change Academic Schedule:** Sterling College has modified the academic calendar to reduce the instances of students traveling outside of Vermont and returning to the campus, ending the Fall semester on-campus classes before November Break for all except one class: “SS106A Expedition 2 - Winter Outdoor Challenge”. This class will begin on November 30 and will end December 11. Only students enrolled in this course are permitted to remain on campus during November Break. Sterling College’s modified academic calendar can be found on [our website](#).
For the Spring Semester, Sterling College has a later start than usual, and has eliminated the traditional Spring Break with an alternative break that encourages students to remain in Vermont and on campus.
 - h. Reduce on-campus events:** To protect the health and safety of our community, Sterling College has cancelled on-campus programming from outside speakers for the fall semester, including events that would encourage large crowds such as parents’ weekend and alumni weekend. All on campus events will comply with [ACCD event guidance](#).
- 2. Decrease transmission of COVID-19 among staff and students once on campus through effective public health measures.**
- a. Face Coverings:** Face coverings are required to be worn by all faculty, staff, students and visitors when in the presence of others. Sterling College is providing all faculty, staff and students a supply of reusable face coverings that they are expected to maintain.
 - b. Health Screenings:** All students and employees must complete a daily health screening prior to interacting with anyone on the campus, including going to class, going to a dining hall, or participating in any campus activity or any work setting. This screening survey shall require an individual to verify that the individual has no symptoms of COVID-19 (including fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea). Sterling students and Employees will use the “Sterling College Daily Health Screening” form to perform their daily health screening.
 - c. Contact Tracing Journal:** Students and employees are encouraged to keep a contact journal of other people with whom there has been close contact each day. This would make it easier to make contact with these individuals so they

can take proper precautions to prevent further spread of COVID-19 should a Sterling College student or employee with whom they have been in contact become ill.

- d. **Hand Hygiene:** Students, faculty and staff will have easy and frequent access to soap and water or hand sanitizer. Handwashing or hand sanitization is required frequently.
- e. **Cleaning and Disinfecting:** All common spaces (when open to students, faculty and staff) and equipment, including bathrooms, frequently touched surfaces and doors, tools and equipment, and vehicles will be cleaned regularly and, when possible, prior to transfer from one person to another, in accordance with CDC guidance.
- f. **Physical Distancing:** Students, faculty and staff must observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on campus. The occupancy of designated common areas will be limited, so that occupants maintain strict social distancing of no less than 6 feet per individual.
- g. **Dining Halls:** Vermont campus residential students will have their meals delivered three times a day (twice on weekends) to their Living & Learning Pods (LLPs) from the Sterling kitchen. The responsibility of receiving food deliveries will be directed to the CA or advisory unit of each LLP. Any issues should be directly addressed to the Director of Dining Services. In addition to the established food delivery plan, residential students will receive weekly delivery of “snacks and basics”. Commuter students and Sterling faculty and staff will have the option for grab and go lunches from the CRC.
Each pod will be set up with cutlery, plates, glassware, and space provided for serving and table and chairs for dining. Clear guidelines for students and staff will be established for cleaning, disposal, recycling, and composting. Each pod will need to communicate directly and clearly with the kitchen should any issue arise, or if any item is needed.
Kentucky residential students will continue to provide their own dining services and will follow strict cleaning protocols for kitchen facilities.
- h. **Classrooms:** Students and faculty are required to wear face covering or other PPE in the classrooms, labs, studios, etc. Students, faculty, and staff are expected to observe strict social distancing of 6 feet while on campus. The occupancy of classrooms, labs, lounges, study spaces, meeting rooms, and other designated common areas have been adjusted so that students, faculty, staff and visitors maintain strict social distancing of no less than 6 feet per individual. Residential students within the same pod will be allowed to sit closer than 6 ft together in the classroom, but will still be required to wear a mask.

Sterling students will gather together in self-contained units - 'pods' - that live and learn together. These small groups of students, ranging from 7 to 18 students in size, will share a residence hall, dine together, study the same package of courses together, and work together. Each Living & Learning Pod (LLP) will be dedicated to specific areas of study and supported by a small team of dedicated faculty and staff. Most students will participate in two different LLPs through the course of the semester - one in Fall Block 1, and one in Fall Block 2. Sterling College's living and learning pod structure provides assigned use of classrooms and common spaces that restricts density of use to only the students and instructors within the assigned pod.

Classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected each morning by facilities and additional cleaning of classrooms will be conducted by student workers within the assigned pod. There will be clear cleaning protocols and rotas in place for all common spaces.

To meet the needs of all our students, we are offering two fall 2020 semester options for undergraduate students.

1. The on-campus option: return to campus with a mix of in-person and online (asynchronous)/remote (synchronous) instruction within our Living and Learning Pod structure.
2. The at-home option: remain at home with online/remote instruction.

- i. **Residence Hall Density/ Residential Pod Structure:** The Living and Learning pod structure allows for residential students to adopt a COVID family unit approach to their living quarters, where they will be able to exercise their own preference and discretion to interact with each other indoors without facial coverings and social distancing. No outside visitors are allowed into Vermont residential halls, including students from other residential pods or commuter students.

In Kentucky, residential students will also exercise their own preference and discretion to interact with each other without facial coverings and social distancing. No outside visitors will be allowed in residence halls. Employees and non-resident students will follow strict protocols for facilities use that are within residential hall space.

- j. **Libraries:** For Block 2 of the Fall Semester, Sterling College's Brown Library will be utilized as a classroom space for an assigned Living and Learning Pod. The physical library space will be available for use by students outside of the assigned pod at designated times with specific COVID protocols that adhere to the capacity limit, physical distancing, and operation guidelines set forth by the [Safety and Healthy Return to Campus Guidelines](#).

- k. **Athletics:** Sterling College will alter our athletic offerings to comply with state and federal safety guidance, in addition to sports-specific guidance for college level sports, which is forthcoming. All collegiate sports traveling from or to Vermont will comply with the state's cross state travel guidance and quarantine requirements. No spectators are allowed at competitions.
- l. **Performing Arts:** Only performing arts that allow for social distancing will occur. Any performances shall comply with ACCD guidance on events. Additionally, the Office of Student Life will work closely with the Student Activities Committee to ensure that student events allow for social distancing and comply with [ACCD event guidance](#).

m. **Transportation:**

The State of Vermont expects that private charter buses and large multi-passenger vans should only be used if density is reduced to allow for social distancing. This includes reducing capacity to 50 percent, leaving every other seat empty, and every other row open. Cloth face coverings must be worn.

Sterling will, therefore, take the following precautions that support its approach to Living & Learning Pods (LLP) to avoid prolonged exposure:

- Preferably, only student members of the same **residential** LLP will travel in a Sterling vehicle at the same time. No face masks required.
- When the driver is **not** a member of the **residential** LLP being transported, the passenger seat and first row of the van will be left vacant or used for storage. Face mask required for everyone.
- When any passenger is **not** a member of the **residential** LLP being transported, occupancy will be reduced by 50% and everyone will wear masks.
- When both practical and safe, windows should be open to increase ventilation.
- After use, all surfaces in the vehicle must be wiped down with antibacterial wipes found in the Sterling vehicle.
- In emergency circumstances, where the above policies create additional risk to driver or passengers, safety measures take precedence.

- n. **Protect At-Risk Faculty, Staff and Students:** We are implementing strategies and policies to address the needs of faculty, staff and students who have underlying health issues.
3. **Quickly identify individuals with COVID-19 and put containment procedures in place to minimize the impact on students, staff and education.**
- a. **Adequate Health Services:** Sterling College will be extending services provided by the Wellness Service, including hiring a full-time nurse to help coordinate Sterling's COVID-19 response plan and to coordinate care to students in quarantine and isolation. Additionally, the Wellness Center will assist students in coordinating health and wellness resources either through telehealth or in person. Students will be able to visit the Director of Wellness

- e. **Residential Halls:** The residential hall facility at the Wendell Berry Farming Program is a shared-use space with residential students, commuter students, and employees. Strict facilities use protocols will be followed for the shared-use residence hall.
- f. **Dining Services:** Kentucky residential students will continue to provide their own dining services and will follow strict cleaning protocols for kitchen facilities.
- g. **Containment Procedures:** Identify residential students who are positive for Covid-19 and utilize [CDC guidelines](#) for isolating a person who lives in shared housing. Kentucky guidelines for [contact tracing](#) will be utilized. Regional health services outlined in the [Student Handbook](#) will be available.