

Sterling College

WORKING HANDS. WORKING MINDS.

October 29, 2020

Dear Sterling Community Members,

After careful consideration of our community's needs and COVID-19 activity in Vermont and our surrounding counties, we have determined that it is necessary to implement three changes to campus COVID protocols. As you will read below, two of these changes are in response to the need to increase preventative measures due to the growth of COVID-19 activity in Vermont. The third change comes from the need to revise our residential pod structure to account for individuals who seek to be ['close-contacts'](#) with others outside of their pod. **These changes go into effect on the Craftsbury campus tomorrow: Friday, October 30.**

Change 1: All students and employees must wear face coverings at all times when on campus, *including* outside. The only exceptions to the face covering requirement are:

- When you are alone in a private space.
- When you are alone in your office.
- For residential students, when you are among your podmates in your residential hall.
- When you are eating in an appropriately physically distanced location from others.
- When you are exercising alone outdoors.
- If you are smoking outdoors and maintaining strict physical distance.

Why has the College made this change?

Keeping six feet apart is easier said than done. While we understand that folks' best intention is to stay 6 feet apart when not wearing a mask outside, it is commonly not maintained throughout activities or conversation. You are now being asked to continue to maintain physical distance and start wearing your mask when outside with others. While each measure provides limited protection, the combination of them both increases your individual protection, and better protects your family and loved ones.

Change 2: Restricted Travel

For residential students, travel off campus is now restricted to Orleans, Lamoille, and Caledonia Counties (outlined in red below). We strongly encourage this for all commuter students and employees. If you have a medical appointment or your employment requires you to travel outside these three counties, you will need to gain permission from either Favor Ellis or Megan Banner-Sutherland.



Why has the College made this change?

Sterling has been monitoring COVID-19 activity in Vermont and our surrounding areas. Cases are on the rise, and models are showing an increase of activity in state. We are increasing travel restrictions as a *proactive preventative measure*. It's about turning the spigot ahead of the curve and not implementing change after it is too late.

Change 3: For Residential Students, your 'household' or 'living' unit consists of the individual(s) you choose to be 'close-contacts' with (i.e. not wear face coverings, not maintain social distancing). Because of the high-risk nature of congregate living, you are only able to maintain ONE of the following:

- **Be 'close-contacts' with your residential podmates.** You do not need to maintain social distance or wear face coverings when interacting with residential pod-mates, who are considered part of your household unit.

- Be '**close-contact**' with **ONE individual outside of your residential pod**. You do not need to maintain social distance or wear face coverings when interacting with the *one individual* outside of your residential pod, as this individual would be considered your 'living' unit. If you choose this, you will need to:
 - Ensure consensual agreement between you and the *one* individual outside of your residential pod.
 - Maintain social distance and wear face coverings when interacting with your residential pod-mates, including in shared common spaces in the residential hall and in class.
 - If visiting a residential hall that is not your own, you are *only* able to visit the dorm room of your 'living' unit.
 - Extra vigilance of sanitization of spaces (such as use of the bathroom) needs to be maintained.
 - If you have a roommate, the roommate can not be present during visitation. You must communicate and coordinate with the roommate and respect their needs.
 - No one from outside your residential pod is allowed in the common spaces of your residential hall.

Why has the College made this change?

- After receiving ample feedback from residential students (we hear you!), we recognize the need for diversity in human interaction.
- The key to these two options is **minimizing 'close-contacts' across residential pods** to prevent the spread of COVID-19 from one pod to the other.
- We want to acknowledge the other creative solutions we received. We understand that this doesn't necessarily address everyone's need for diversity in human interaction, but this is the best we can offer at this time, while still complying to [Vermont's Higher Ed Safety Guidelines](#).
- Up to this point, being an insular community has been our greatest strength in keeping COVID-19 outside of our community. This can quickly become our greatest weakness, due to the fact that congregate living facilities (i.e. dorms) have the potential to spread viruses like wildfire if no preventative measures are taken. The solution we have created will keep the integrity of our pod structure to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 on our campus and reduce the chance of disruption to your classes and reduce the chance of *you* contracting COVID-19 or becoming a '**close-contact**' to someone who does and then need to quarantine in your room for up to 14 days.

On behalf of our extended Craftsbury community and the Board of Trustees, I want to express gratitude for the effort and care you have each - students, faculty, and staff - taken to preserve the health and wellbeing of the College and town in these truly challenging times.

All my best,
Matthew Derr
President & Faculty