



COVID Management

**A Good Start
to Spring 2022**

February 7, 2022

Remember: Our Primary Goal for Spring 2022 is to...

Fully pursue our on campus education and research missions.

We also hope to continue to shift away from an institutional “stop the spread” mindset, and towards personal responsibility with a focus on minimizing severe health consequences.

With full operations, conditions continue to improve

- Vaccine + booster compliance very high
- Case levels dropping on campus and around MIT
- No concerning patterns from contact tracing
- Mild symptoms experienced by most who are fully-vaccinated

Therefore, we anticipate relaxing some COVID policies by mid-week (will wait on two more days of testing to make a final determination)

Approach is Consistent with State Guidance

The “twindemic” is COVID and social isolation.

With virtually all students and staff vaccinated, higher education has the opportunity to lead – transitioning back to “near normal.”

Colleges and universities should accelerate their efforts to transition back to “near normal” conditions...



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January 28, 2022

Dear Public and Private Higher Education Presidents,

Together, our goal must now be to transition the COVID-19 Pandemic into an endemic, a highly contagious virus that is manageable and allows us to regain a sense of normalcy.

The science, our understanding, and the tools available continue to evolve. Today, we have diagnostic, rapid antigen and surveillance testing, high throughput in-state testing capacity, digital vaccine cards, a digital notification system, robust data reporting, public health risk mitigation strategies, and most important effective and safe vaccines. In a state with one of the highest vaccine acceptance rates in the country, we must navigate the careful transition into opening up our society while simultaneously employing public health mitigation strategies.

The “twindemic” is COVID and social isolation. The impact of two years of social isolation, anxiety, stress and depression is profound and one we must confront and support individuals, their loved ones, and our community. With virtually all students and staff vaccinated, higher education has the opportunity to lead -- transitioning back to “near normal.”

Early in the pandemic, we made trade-offs, and veered on the side of remote learning and isolation. Overly strict protocols that inhibit any level of social interaction are counterproductive, at this time. Now is the time to reconsider these protocols to help promote a return to healthy social interactions, including: remote learning; restricting or discouraging group activities; overly aggressive surveillance testing; and mask type requirements.

Colleges and universities should accelerate their efforts to transition back to “near normal” conditions, which include focusing on individuals who manifest COVID symptoms and test positive for COVID, and especially those who are particularly at-risk for serious illness and hospitalization. Along with relaxation of strict protocols, must be active, supportive communication and teaching about how to engage within their community safely.

Equally important, colleges should continue to increase their investments in mental health services to address the widespread issues of anxiety and depression that have been exacerbated by the challenges of the past two years. Together, we must lean in with individuals who are struggling to find a sense of equilibrium and community. It may take time, but together we can move forward.

Sincerely,

James A. Peyser
Secretary of Education

Marylou Suddeers, MSW, ACSW
Secretary of Health and Human Services

Strictly Enforcing Booster Requirement

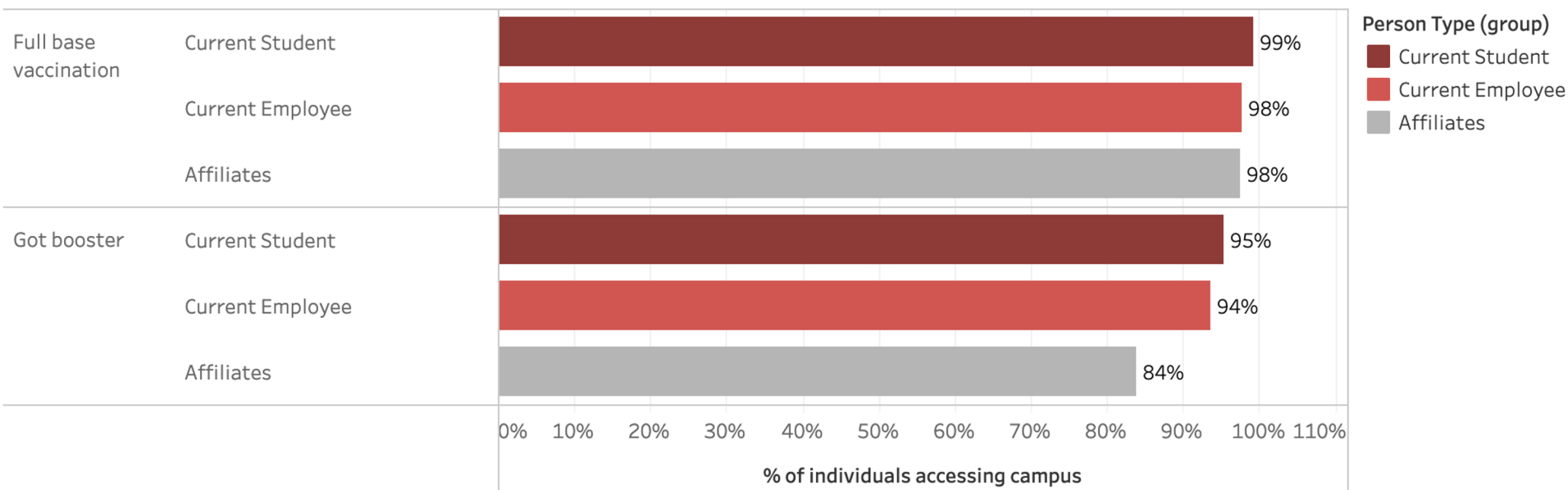
(percentages contain some people who are not yet eligible)

Vaccine status for people in CP who recently attested

Last update 2/6/2022 10:31:05 AM

Last Attestation

This week



Wastewater Concentration (our best measure)

INNOVATION BEAT

The Cambridge startup tracking COVID in America's waste water

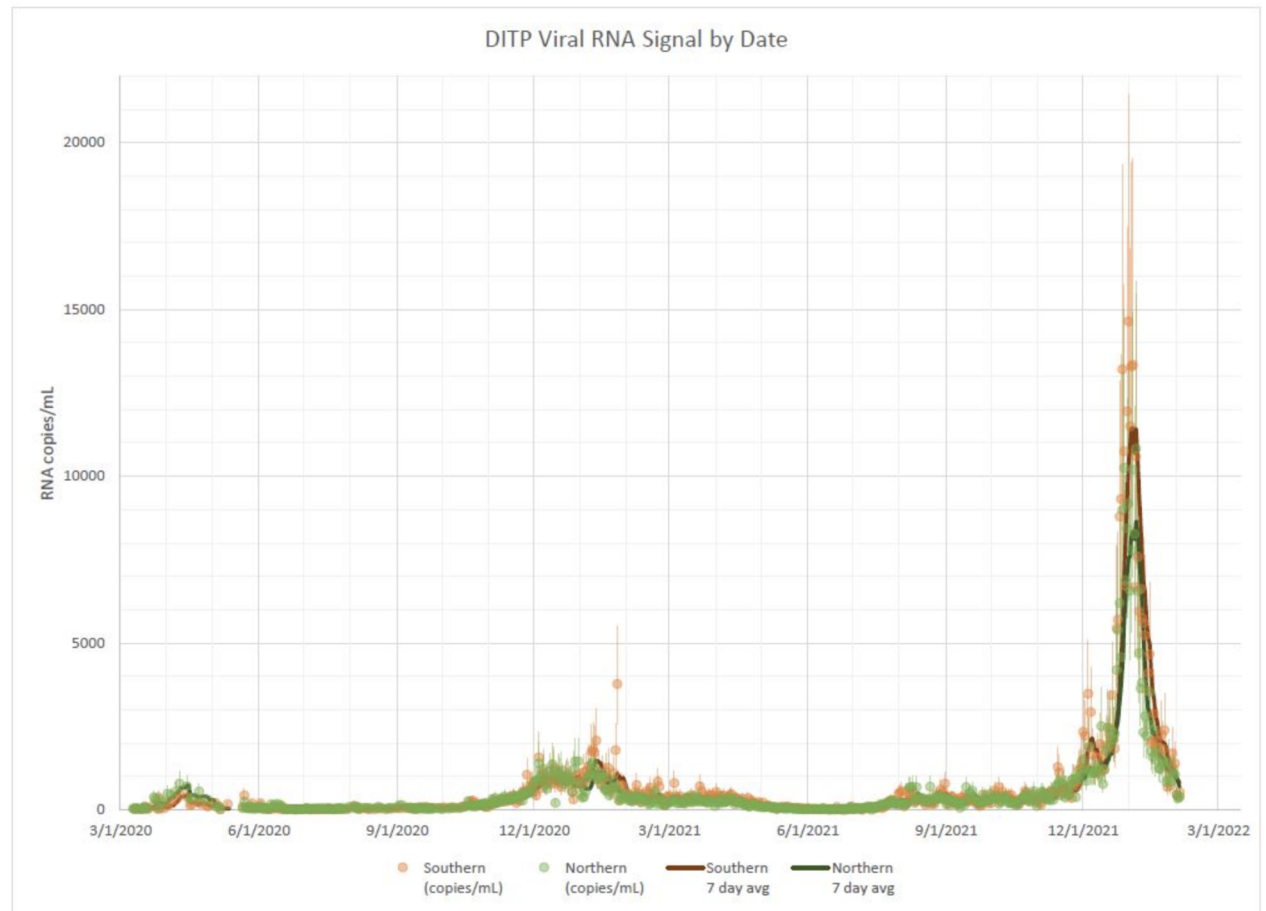
Biobot Analytics is gaining traction as it studies sewage to predict the pandemic

By [Pranshu Verma](#) Globe Staff, Updated January 20, 2022, 10:56 a.m.



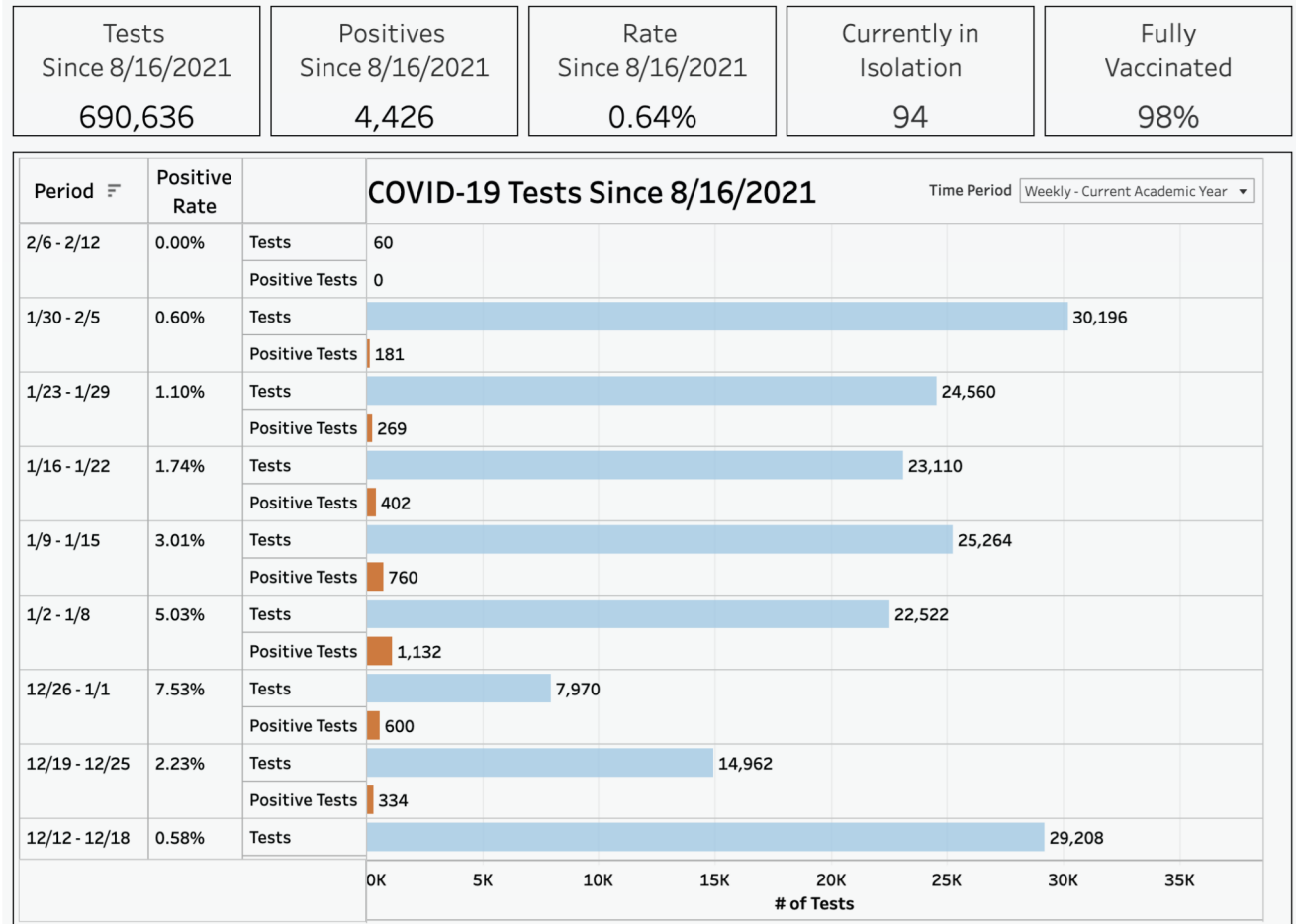
Biobot Data - samples submitted through 02/03/2022

The Omicron variant was detected in a 12/09/2021 wastewater sample from Deer Island South and in a 12/10/2021 sample from Deer Island North.



<https://www.mwra.com/biobot/biobotdata.htm>, 2/6/22

MIT's Covid-19 Positivity Rate Is Continuing to Decline



<https://covidapps.mit.edu/dashboard>, 2/6/22

The Plan for the Next Few Weeks

- Wait until we have all the data resulting from Monday/Tuesday testing (we want ~10 days of testing into the new semester)
- If all continues to look good, then on Wednesday afternoon (Feb 9) we will send a letter to the community describing changes that will begin on Feb 10th and continue through the rest of February

Anticipated Changes: Feb 10th and Feb 14th

- **Food at gatherings, events, and meetings:** Beginning **February 10**, food and drinks will once again be allowed at [MIT-sponsored gatherings, events, and meetings](#), both on and off campus. Room occupancy remains unrestricted, including when food and drink are consumed.
- **Dining hall capacity and retail dining options:** Seating in MIT residential dining halls will return to full capacity on **February 14**, and retail outlets will continue to resume operations.
- **Masking exemptions:** On **February 10**, we will reinstate the one-mask-down-at-a-time policy for fully vaccinated instructors and presenters provided everyone else in the room is masked. Please read [the full policy for additional details](#). There will also be new exceptions in MIT residence halls and FSILGs; fully-vaccinated residents will be able to be unmasked when in groups of up to four people in certain areas of their residence.
- **Spectators at athletic events:** Indoor athletic events, which were recently limited to those in Covid Pass in response to the Omicron variant, will once again also be open to all individuals with a Tim Ticket starting on **February 10**.

Anticipated Changes: **Feb 21st**

- **Once-per-week testing for students, residents, and the unvaccinated:** Students and residents in MIT residence halls and FSILGs will soon be required [to submit Covid tests once per week, rather than twice per week](#), in order to access campus buildings. Community members with approved exemptions will still be required to test once per week.
- **On-demand testing for all others:** Regular Covid testing will no longer be required for all others but community members who believe they may have been exposed to the virus must report the exposure in Covid Pass and test. COVID-19 testing operations will continue to [remain open and operational](#) for anyone who would like to test.
- **Individuals who attest to symptoms** in the Covid Pass portion of the Atlas App will be required to test by the app before gaining access to campus. **Individuals who attest to being a close contact** of someone with COVID-19 will be required to test five days after their exposure.

What Is Not Changing (for now)

- **Indoor masking:** MIT must continue to comply with [the City of Cambridge's indoor masking requirements](#). If and when the local rules are relaxed, we expect we will update our Institute policies to reflect Cambridge policy.
- **Daily health attestations:** All MIT community members will continue to be required to complete daily health attestations in order to access campus buildings.
- **90-day testing exemptions:** Individuals who have tested positive for Covid-19 in the last 90 days will remain exempt from the testing program and are not allowed to test through Covid Pass until the 90-day period has ended.

If Conditions Continue to Improve

- Shortly after spring break, we plan to move *all community members* to testing-on-demand.

Questions?