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WWCC Community,

I've received questions from many of you concerning what policies Walla Walla Community College will implement regarding COVID-19 vaccinations, particularly as we return to our campuses next month and increase in-person instruction this fall.

To be clear, Walla Walla Community College will not strictly require students, staff or faculty to be vaccinated as a condition of enrollment or employment. At the same time, the College very strongly encourages everyone on campus, and in the communities we serve, to be vaccinated. There's no question that vaccination is the most powerful tool available to fight this deadly virus, and mass vaccination is our best option to regain some sense of pre-pandemic normalcy in how the College functions.

While some colleges and universities in our state have opted to require vaccinations, Walla Walla Community College faces its own unique set of circumstances that prevent us from taking that action. First, we are not a residential college. For that reason and others, WWCC has historically not required vaccination of any type. Because we do not require other vaccines, we do not have the infrastructure or capacity for creating, storing, and protecting private health information. We also do not have the ability to enforce a vaccination mandate.

Here's what we can and will do: WWCC will continue to educate our students, faculty, staff, and communities about the benefit of vaccination and the precautions we all need to take to stop the virus from spreading.

We are looking at incentives that the College could put in place to encourage those who are not yet vaccinated to do so, in part by amplifying Governor Jay Inslee's vaccination lottery message, where the State of Washington draws for prizes from the list of those who have been vaccinated. Importantly, we will also facilitate vaccination for our students, faculty and staff. The College is currently working with the Walla Walla Department of Community Health to hold vaccination clinics on the Walla Walla campus and we are exploring ways to do the same on the Clarkston campus. Dates, times, and other details will be shared as soon as they are available.

WWCC will continue to monitor and conscientiously implement local, state, and federal public health directives. Here in Washington State, an order by Governor Inslee covering all of higher education remains in place. It requires wearing facemasks at all times on college and university campuses and everyone entering a college building must complete a brief health screening log. Once the Governor's office has given us updated guidance, we will adapt accordingly and update our WWCC plan, which will be shared widely as soon as it is available.

I would like to close by recognizing and expressing my appreciation for the thoughtful questions and comments I've received. They convey how much you all care about each other, our students and our communities. Unfortunately, COVID-19 continues to throw challenges in our path. But these are challenges we have and will overcome together.

Please stay healthy and safe and enjoy your summer.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chad E. Hickox". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chad Emerson Hickox, Ph.D.

President

(he/him/his)

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