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DATE: 2/14/22

TO: Ed Seidel, President
University of Wyoming

FROM: Presidential COVID Advisory Group

RE: Update and New Recommendation

COVID-19 Information Update

Public Health update for the week of 2/6/22 to 2/12/22

Statewide

- 2,513 cases in Wyoming (4,351 cases in Wyoming previous week)
- Transmission levels decreasing statewide
- Hospitalizations following that trend: down to 100 from 150 last week
- 50 long-term care facilities with active cases--but cases have decreased

Albany County

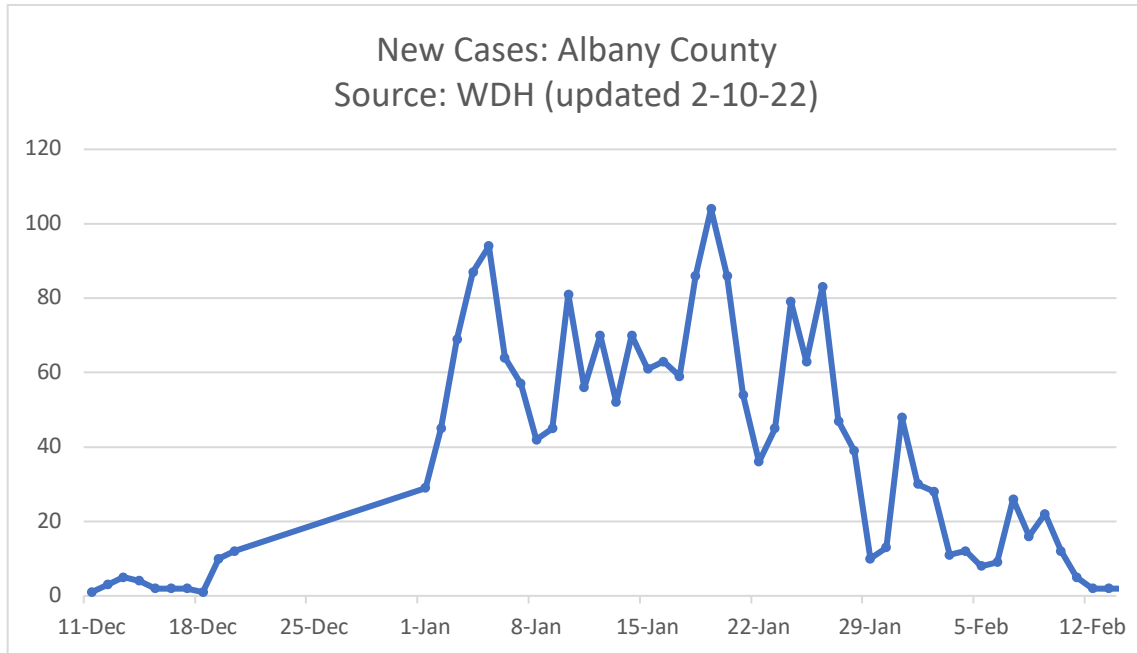
- 122 cases (196 cases previous week)

Transmission Indicators for Albany County

	Jan 6-19	Jan 13-26	Jan 20-Feb 2	Jan 27-Feb 9
Daily New Cases / 100,000	2,315 Very High	2,446 Very High	1,993 Very High	1,062 Very High
Test Percent Positivity	15.2% High	15.4% High	13.2% High	9.0% Mod High
OVERALL	VERY HIGH	VERY HIGH	HIGH	HIGH

The CDC recommends indoor masking in public for everyone in areas of substantial or high transmission.

New Case Trends: Albany County



This figure shows that the surge in cases that lasted during the month of January in Albany County are on the decline. (Note: WDH revises county data on a daily basis. Cases reported February 11-13 will most likely be increased over the next several days.)

Laramie County

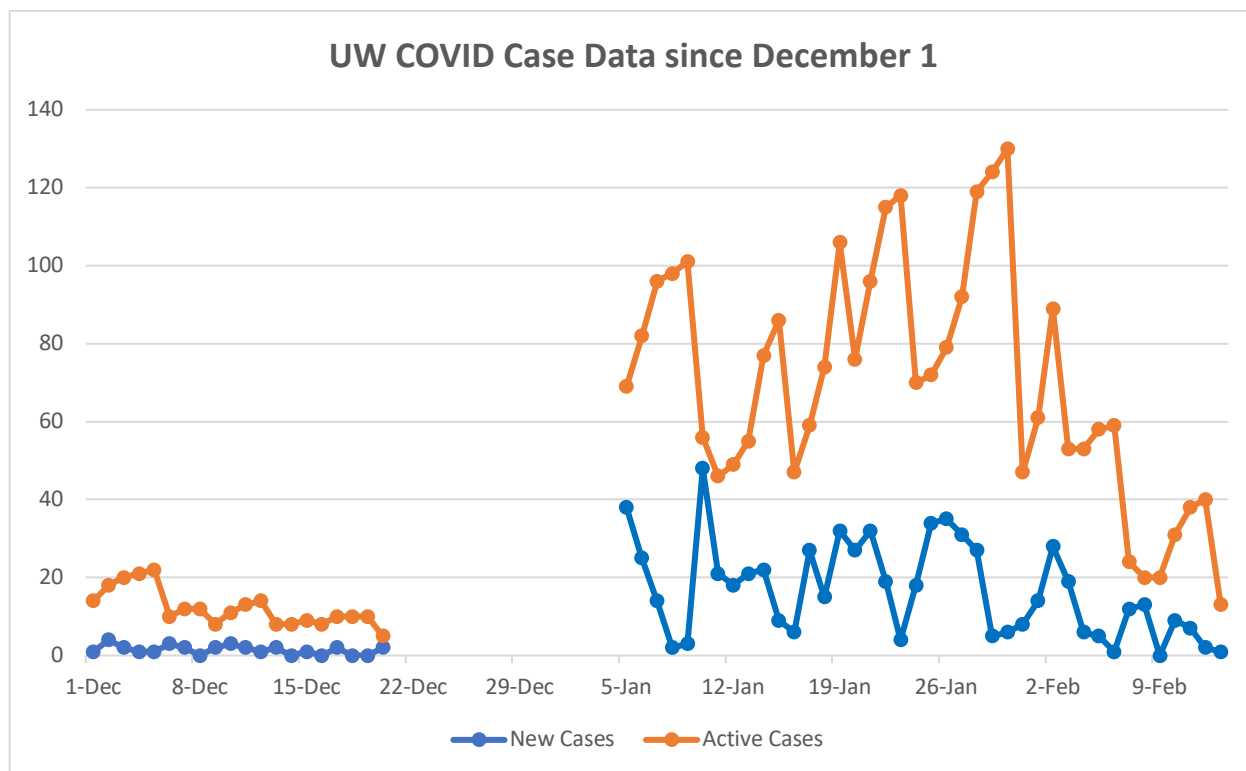
- Hospitalizations in the 20s range--back to being mostly older patients
- 5 deaths since Friday
- Most of the vaccinated hospitalizations were not boosted

Natrona County

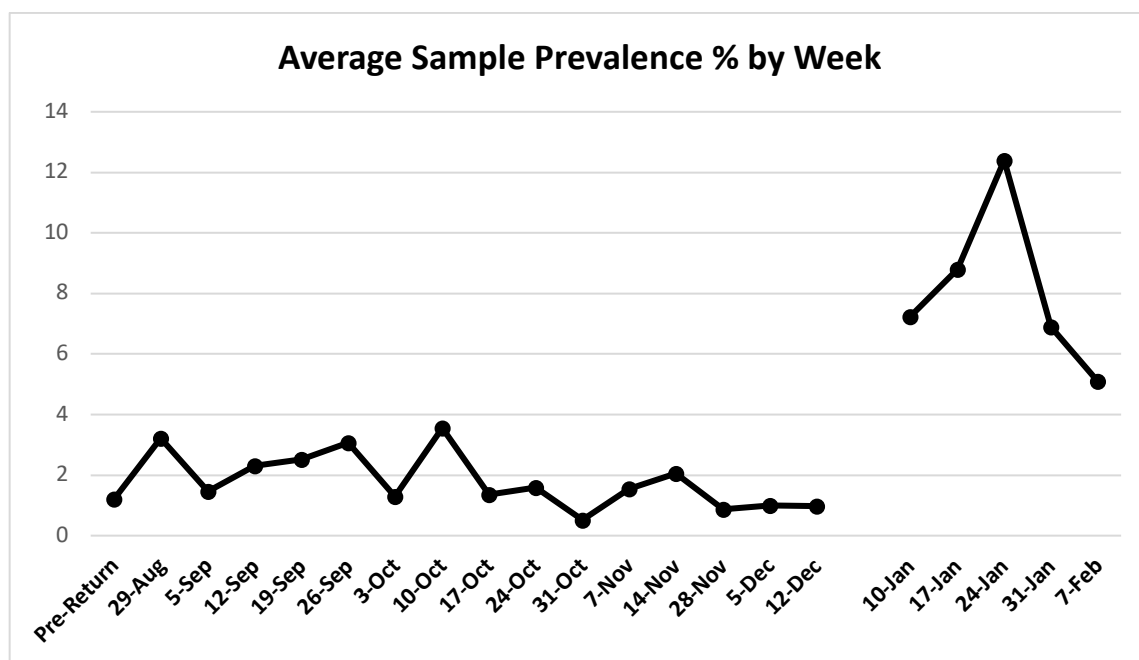
- COVID patient numbers at Wyoming Medical Center decreased considerably

Effective 1/31/22, Moderna has been given full FDA approval for individuals 18 and over.

UW Community (no data reported from Dec 21-Jan 4)



This figure shows a significant increase in New and Active Cases in January compared to the end of the Fall semester. There is a notable decrease in Active Cases--and a moderate decrease in New Cases-- since late January.



Sample prevalence percentages in January have been significantly higher compared to Fall semester. After a relatively high prevalence percentage during the week of January 24, sample prevalence has decreased two consecutive weeks.

Considerations for the Remainder of the Spring 2022 Semester

Current Trend in Cases

After a surge in cases related to Omicron that occurred during the month of January statewide (and nationwide), and there is now a noticeable downward trend in cases.

The Next Variant

A new variant of Omicron--the B variant--has been identified in South Africa. Thus far, it is considered to be more transmissible than the "A" variant, but the severity of symptoms is similar to the A variant. It is imperative that global prevalence of the B variant be monitored.

Vaccines

UW needs to intensify its messaging about the importance of the COVID-19 vaccine, and in particular, the advantage of receiving the booster. Student Health Services has begun to administer Moderna booster doses; they plan to coordinate additional booster clinics in the next several weeks.

Masking Policy

The Advisory Group met on February 7th and discussed at length the current UW masking policy and whether it should be continued, revised, or discontinued altogether. A number of concerns were expressed regarding the current UW policy:

- The pre-determined exceptions to the policy that was crafted in August 2021 have caused the campus policy to be viewed as highly ambiguous.
- There is no enforcement of the current policy, and no individual or unit is eager to enforce the policy.
- The concerns mentioned above, coupled with "COVID fatigue" and apathy, have resulted in reduced adherence to the current campus masking policy.
- The position of faculty-students-staff regarding the current masking policy is mixed. A significant number have voiced a preference for discontinuing the policy; a significant number prefer to maintain the policy.
- The greatest risk of viral transmission--on a larger scale--continues to be in the classroom. Although the lack of social distancing plays a role, it is the duration of potential exposure in the classroom that is cause for concern.
- Although there were varying opinions within the group regarding continuing or discontinuing the current mask policy, the majority question whether it might be premature to discontinue the mask policy altogether.

It should be mentioned that for institutions of higher education the CDC continues to recommend that masks should be worn indoors.

Recommendation Regarding the UW Masking Policy

The current masking policy states that masks are required whenever “social distancing” cannot be achieved. This policy excludes UW events on campus where attendance is voluntary.

In the interest of providing a policy that is more straightforward, the Advisory Group is proposing the following recommendations:

1. Effective February 21, 2022:
 - a. Masks will continue to be required in **all medically-related units**, including:
 - i. Student Health Services
 - ii. Medical Clinic area within Athletics
 - iii. Athletic Training Space in Half Acre Gym
 - iv. Family Medicine Residency Programs in Casper and Cheyenne
 - v. Albany Community Health Clinic
 - vi. UW Speech & Hearing Clinic
 - vii. UW Psychology Clinic
 - viii. University Counseling Center
 - b. Masks will be required in **all UW classrooms**, unless a classroom has been arranged to allow for social distancing.
 - c. Masks will be required in any **UW campus office** when it is requested by the office occupant.
 - d. Masks will be required in the **UW Early Childhood Education Center**.
 - e. Masks will be required on all **UW campus buses**.
 - f. **UW supports those who choose to wear masks in other areas of campus.**
2. The revised masking policy will remain in effect until the Albany County COVID Transmission Indicators show an overall transmission level that is **Low for 3 consecutive weeks**.
3. County Transmission Indicators will continue to be monitored. In the event of a significant (and sustained) increase in transmission risk, the modified policy should be revisited.

Considerations Regarding the UW COVID-19 Testing Program

Currently, the UW COVID-19 testing program consists of weekly randomized testing of 3% of the campus community as well as limited public testing.

Although the testing program has been useful in monitoring the prevalence of COVID-19 on campus, the data have never been used to make decisions regarding the delivery of courses, masking policies, or postponing/cancelling UW events. In addition, the testing program is an expensive endeavor, both in regard to equipment/supplies and personnel.

The data acquired from the UW testing program tends to mirror COVID-19 data reported at the county level by the Wyoming Department of Health.

Recommendations: UW COVID-19 Testing Program

1. UW should terminate the randomized testing program at the end of the Spring 2022 semester.
2. COVID-19 test supplies should continue to be made available for UW Athletics and UW Student Health Services.
3. The future of public testing at the UW will be determined at a later date.