

No mandatory masks, vaccines at WCTC

Staff back to 100% in-person next week

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PEWAUKEE — Brad Piazza is looking forward to seeing more cars in the parking lot and students in the hallways at Waukesha County Technical College.

Piazza, WCTC's vice president of Learning, said the school is encouraging vaccination, but not requiring it nor will it require proof of vaccination. Masks will be optional as well.

"We reset our classrooms back to pre-COVID capacities," he said. "We are fully open to the public in the fall."

Staff is back to 100% in-person work starting Aug. 1 as well. After going remote for a time, they transitioned to 50/50 in-person and remote in June, then 75/25 this month. For faculty, the campus will remain open for coming and going as their workflow may require.

Looking ahead, Piazza said the campus will have more in-person options than last year, though likely not as many as prior to COVID-19. That's partly due to some forced innovations turning out to be popular.

"Some of what we did last year worked," he said. "Zoom proved to be a nice way to deliver some courses ... students enjoyed that flexibility."

At WCTC students can opt for the class formats that best fit their needs, sometimes switching between in-person and virtual as life throws unexpected complications their way.

"We invested a significant amount of money in

simulation software, in virtual backpacks, in other types of technology to be able to provide remote instruction and services to students," Piazza said. "We will continue to utilize that."

Most of the college's classrooms will be upgraded to allow faculty to create live and recorded programming if they choose, he said.

Piazza said offering those options proved a layer of flexibility for students who need it. He said in the case of a COVID type event in the future, WCTC will be better prepared this time around.

WCTC has a "reentry watch group" meeting on a biweekly basis to analyze COVID-19 data and make any adjustments as needed. Last year, the college had the vast majority of its programming go virtual but allowed for in-person labs in some classes.

Although WCTC's eight-week term calendar doesn't have the traditional summer break some academic institutions do, students will be coming back Aug. 16 for the start of the fall.

As in-person activity begins to return to more typical levels, Piazza emphasized the importance of staying home if one is not feeling well. He said it will be revealing to analyze what types of services and options students utilize most once they return in full force.

"We were creative, yet cautious," Piazza said of the college's navigation during the last year and a half. "We adapted all the way through this, faculty, staff and students."