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Forward Together Update, March 18, 2021

University of Northern Iowa

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Dear Panther Community,

The more infectious B.1.1.7 variant was detected in our county for the first time, the Black Hawk County Health Department [announced today](#).

While this development was not unexpected, it highlights the risk that COVID-19 continues to pose to our community.

Public health officials are warning that we will be in a close race against these variants in the coming weeks. While cases were dropping everywhere in the country a month ago, as variants spread 15 states are now seeing more cases than they were two weeks ago and 18 others - including Iowa - have seen their declines level off.

We must do everything we can to prevent the spread here. That means wearing masks, remaining physically distanced, washing your hands, using the Panther Health survey and getting tested as needed.

There was also some good news today, as the county health department moved us down into the yellow "elevated" risk category for the first time in many months.

The category - the second-lowest out of four - means that COVID-19 cases have fallen below 50 per 100,000 in the last 7 days, an extremely welcome development. Let's do all we can to keep that number falling.

Vaccine Updates

On Wednesday state officials announced that starting April 5, all Iowa adults will be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The news came with some large caveats including that this timeline is dependent on vaccine supply.

For now, we can expect that supplies will remain limited but are projected to increase significantly in coming weeks. Public health officials have urged us all to remain patient.

The federal government has said there will be enough vaccines for every adult by the end of May. About 41 million people, or 12% of the total U.S. population, have been fully vaccinated as of Wednesday, according to CDC data.

Iowa expanded eligibility earlier this month to people aged 16-64 with preexisting conditions that put them at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19. The next expansion would cover all adults. The vaccines have not yet been approved for children.

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We encourage everyone to be vaccinated as soon as possible. Currently in most cases, your healthcare provider will contact you to schedule an appointment. Those aged 65 and older can call 211 for assistance. Those who do not have a healthcare provider can contact the Black Hawk County Public Health Department at 319-292-2360.

More information is also available on the [state's vaccination site](#).

If you have a question, please visit forwardtogether.uni.edu or email it to forwardtogether@uni.edu. Thanks for all that you do to keep yourself, your family and the Panther community safe.

Stay Well,

John Vallentine,
Associate Provost for Faculty

Joseph Rayzor,
Director of Risk Management, Environmental Health and Safety