



Dr. Jim Malatras
Chancellor

H. Carl McCall SUNY Building
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MEMORANDUM

To: SUNY Presidents

From: Jim Malatras, Chancellor

Date: May 26, 2021

Re: 2021 Summer and Fall Semester Planning and Updated COVID Protocols

Thank you for your patience and guidance as we complete the end of a challenging academic year. With you and your entire team's leadership, we have had a successful Spring 2021 semester.

Over the past few weeks, we have met with various SUNY constituencies including campus leadership, faculty, staff, students, and our partners in labor to hear directly their thoughts on potential modifications to campus guidance, particularly for the Fall 2021 semester. As we have said, we are committed to planning for a more normal return for the fall semester. However, given the almost daily changing policy and health landscape, we are working through many issues that have not yet been finalized.

I want to thank Presidents Dewan and Riley as well as members of the public health working group¹ who have so generously offered their expertise during the course of the pandemic. They provided critical guidance including the updated guidance below moving forward.

As you are aware, there have been major developments over the past several weeks which will only continue as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New York State Department of Health (DOH) and other officials adjust protocols. We will provide you with updated information in a timely manner as we enter the summer and finalize plans for the fall semester.

¹ See Appendix for list of Health Panel members.

I. Modified Guidance

Despite the remaining questions, we are able to issue the following modifications to our current guidance **effective at the end of the Spring 2021 semester**. These protocols are subject to change as conditions evolve and will be updated accordingly. Campuses must continue to comply with any additional requirements imposed by local health departments.

A. Uniform Compliance Guidance

The Uniform Compliance Guidance, issued on September 25, 2020, will expire following the conclusion of the spring semester, and the flexibility to enforce such guidance will be returned to the campus. Such enforcement at the campus level will continue through the 2021-2022 academic year. Further details will be distributed by the Office of General Counsel.

B. COVID-19 Testing

Exemption of Fully Vaccinated Individuals from Weekly Testing. Fully vaccinated students and employees (including auxiliary workers and vendors² with a regular on-campus presence) are exempt from mandatory weekly testing upon the submission of documentation showing completion of a full vaccination series (definition subject to change based on final recommendations from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and CDC on booster shots). Mandatory weekly testing will continue to be required for any person³ who has a physical presence on campus and who has not been fully vaccinated, or who has not shown proof of vaccination. System Administration will help campuses with protocols on how to determine and verify vaccination status, if needed. Diagnostic (PCR) testing of all symptomatic persons, including vaccinated persons who display COVID-related symptoms will continue, and intensive contact tracing will focus on any emerging clusters of cases. Campuses may choose to require more frequent surveillance testing of individuals, regardless of vaccination status.

Reporting. Campuses must continue to report testing results daily through the SUNY Health Portal but can pre-fill entries for days (e.g. weekends) when no testing is or is anticipated to be done.

Noncompliance. Any incidents of non-compliance with campus testing will continue to be handled through the Campus Code of Conduct for students and Human Resources for employees.

² Campuses should continue with the process currently in place for contractors and outside vendors.

³ The mandatory testing agreements with faculty and staff sunset on June 30, 2021 and are currently being renegotiated.

C. Daily Health Screening

Pursuant to the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER), all employees who report to work in-person must continue to submit a daily health screening. Pursuant to current NYSDOH guidance, students must be screened periodically but are not required to be screened on a daily basis. Therefore, campuses may substitute an attestation from any student who comes to campus who agrees to self-monitor for symptoms as listed, and if present, will not report to campus and instead seek health care or a COVID-19 test.⁴

D. Masks and Social Distancing

Beginning May 19, campuses may follow the CDC mask and social distancing rules issued on May 13, 2021. The CDC guidance states that fully vaccinated individuals can resume indoor and outdoor activities without wearing a mask or staying six feet apart. People are considered fully vaccinated: (1) two weeks after receiving the second dose in a two dose COVID-19 vaccine series or (2) two weeks after receiving a single dose COVID-19 vaccine.

Therefore, unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals must continue to wear a mask and maintain six feet social distancing from those outside their residence in both indoor and outdoor settings. However, nothing in this guidance prohibits fully vaccinated individuals from continuing the use of masks.

Campus Flexibility. Given that New York State Department of Health strongly recommends masks and social distancing in indoor settings where vaccination status of individuals is unknown, for the summer semester/term, campuses will have the flexibility to implement additional mask wearing guidance, but such guidance must be widely communicated to the campus community.

Exceptions. Notwithstanding the above and until further notice, all State employees must continue to wear masks and practice six-foot social distancing in all locations, regardless of vaccination status. In all other campus settings including performance spaces, stadiums, gyms, and fitness centers, among others, campuses must follow the current NYSDOH guidance that is appropriate to the space in question. This includes capacity limits, mask wearing, social distancing, and any required proof of testing or vaccination status.

E. Clinical Programs and Courses

Campuses with health care settings and clinical teaching laboratories that function as a health care space may operate without the six-foot distancing normally required in a classroom setting. Masks must continue to be used in these settings regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status.

⁴ We are currently working with NYSDOH on whether we have the authority to further alter this requirement.

F. Academic Calendar

Academic calendar decisions for the 2021-2022 academic year are expected to be made by the campus.

G. College in High School

Students in concurrent enrollment programs must follow the health and safety guidelines and protocols of the location at which they receive instruction. If the course is delivered at their high school, they must follow the local school district guidelines. If a student takes a course on campus, they must follow the SUNY campus guidelines. However, high school students will only be subject to vaccine and testing requirements as designated by New York State local health departments and guidelines provided by local school districts.

H. Visitors

Campuses may use their discretion in allowing visitors but must follow the current New York State guidelines on capacity limits and required verification of negative COVID-19 test results or vaccination status where indicated. A more liberal plan for controlled access to campus may be drafted and, with sign off from the local DOH, implemented.

I. Mandatory Pause Requirements

The current [NYS requirements](#) for a mandatory pause remain in place, which specify that a campus must pause in-person learning and limit in-person activities if the greater of 100 individuals or 5 percent of the total on-campus population test positive using a 14-day rolling average. We will work with the State, as we did prior to the Spring 2021 semester, to make necessary adjustments to the pause requirements that make sense in the current situation.

J. Campus Safety Monitors

Each campus President must appoint a member of their staff as the Campus Safety Monitor who will have the responsibility of coordinating the ongoing campus compliance with all COVID-19 related guidance. Any changes to the designated person should be submitted to Valerie Dent at Valerie.dent@suny.edu.

K. Travel

Campuses should follow [current NYSDOH guidance](#) on testing, vaccination, and quarantine requirements related to travel.

II. Guidance Still Under Development

The following modifications to our current guidance are still being developed, including a review of operational considerations.

A. Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination for Students

In accordance with the directive issued by New York State on May 10, beginning in the fall semester all students who will have a physical presence on campus will be required to be vaccinated with any COVID-19 vaccine that has been approved for use by the FDA. ***The requirement is contingent on final FDA approval of a COVID-19 vaccine.*** We will be working with campus stakeholders to develop a plan to accommodate certain exemptions and grace periods, and will include providing access for vaccinations to students who are not vaccinated upon return to campus in the fall if necessary, and planning for any necessary COVID-19 booster shots once they are available. This will be presented to the Board of Trustees for consideration and adoption. Issues related to non-compliance will also be addressed. The critical ongoing goal is to get everyone in the SUNY community vaccinated.

SUNY has worked with your campuses to develop a robust marketing and social media campaign to encourage students and employees to get vaccinated. We will continue these voluntary efforts even as we plan for a vaccine requirement for the fall.

B. Masks and Social Distancing for Fall Semester

This is an evolving area of concern for all of our campuses. Campuses must plan for multiple scenarios for the use of classrooms until more guidance is issued by the CDC and NYSDOH.

C. Cleaning Protocols

Campuses should continuously assess and confirm that all cleaning protocols are in compliance with [CDC Guidance](#).

D. COVID-19 Surveillance and Pre-Testing

Moving forward, and depending on evolving conditions, the health panel convened by Presidents Dewan and Riley have recommended that anyone who opts out of testing with proof of a vaccine may still be required to participate in periodic, but infrequent, surveillance testing in the fall semester. Moreover, there are ongoing discussions to require all students, faculty, and staff who will be in-person in the Fall 2021 semester to be pretested or tested immediately upon arrival to campus, regardless of vaccination status. This remains under consideration and we are actively reviewing operational constraints at the campus level.

E. Residence Halls and Quarantine & Isolation Space

Based on the anticipated vaccine requirement for students and the lifting of capacity limits in many venues, campuses should plan for a higher occupancy of residence halls in the fall semester with the understanding that reduced capacity may be required. We are currently working with our health partners to understand what requirements may be needed for quarantine and isolation space, but campuses should plan to maintain some previous capacity. The CDC Guidance indicates that fully vaccinated individuals who are exposed to COVID-19 do not have to quarantine unless they are symptomatic. Fully vaccinated individuals who test positive must isolate for 10 days.

F. Fall Campus Plans

Campuses will be required to submit a fall reopening plan consisting of elements still under development.

**Appendix
Public Health Working Group**

Dr. Mantosh Dewan, Co-Chair

President, Upstate Medical University

Dr. Wayne Riley, Co-Chair

President, Downstate Health Sciences University

Dr. Frank A. Middleton

Associate Professor and Director, Graduate Program in Neuroscience
Departments of Neuroscience & Physiology, Psychiatry, Biochemistry, and Pediatrics
Scientific Director, SUNY Molecular Analysis Core Facility, Upstate Medical University

Dr. Christopher P. Morley

Chair, Department of Public Health & Preventive Medicine
Vice Chair for Research, Department of Family Medicine
Professor of Public Health, Family Medicine & Psychiatry
SUNY Upstate Medical University

Dr. Alain Diebold

Empire Innovation Professor of Nanoscale Science-Emeritus
SUNY Polytechnic Institute

Dr. Jon Cohen

Founder and Chief Statistician, JCM Analytics.

Dr. David Holtgrave

Dean, SUNY Empire Innovation Professor, Distinguished Professor
School of Public Health
University at Albany

Dr. Eli Rosenberg

Associate Professor
Epidemiology & Biostatistics
University at Albany

Dr. Greg Wilding

Chair, Professor, Department of Biostatistics
School of Public Health and Health Professions
University of Buffalo

Carol Gomes

Chief Executive Officer & Chief Operating Officer
Stony Brook Medicine

Dr. Stephen Thomas

Chief, Infectious Disease Division
Upstate Medical University