



## Fall 2021 – Principals for Safe Return

As campuses open this fall, it will be impossible to attain 100% vaccination rates among all members of our campus communities. This will be true whether due to continuing vaccine hesitancy, due to legally required medical and religious exemptions, or both. In addition, breakthrough infections among vaccinated individuals and/or the emergence of vaccine resistant variants are possible concerns.

As public health recommendations are rapidly evolving, and our campuses grapple with how to respond to those changes, we must assure that our campuses remain safe this fall. It is also critical to reassure faculty, staff, and students who have continuing concerns about returning to in-person settings this fall that they will be safe. To achieve this, voluntary employee vaccination campaigns must be coupled with continued health and safety protocols which remain in place even as vaccination rates increase.

- 1) **Vaccination:** UUP is willing to partner now with SUNY statewide and at individual campuses on voluntary vaccination campaigns for faculty and staff. These efforts should continue during the summer and include outreach to employees who are currently working remotely. Current reports suggest that campus efforts in this area are generally limited to providing information via campus e-mail about available vaccine appointments. More needs to be done and we are willing to help.
  - a. Campuses should arrange for on-campus pop-up clinics as soon as possible to provide unvaccinated employees with the opportunity to be vaccinated at work on a walk-in basis before school resumes this fall. Employees should be provided educational materials about the availability of these pop-up clinics that include information about the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. Ideally, these materials should be distributed in person to allow for direct person to person conversation regarding the importance of voluntary vaccination.
  - b. Students arriving on campuses this fall who cannot demonstrate fully vaccinated status before arrival must be offered the opportunity to be immediately vaccinated upon arrival. This should include orientation on vaccine safety and the on-campus benefits of being vaccinated in addition to informing students that vaccination is/will be mandatory with FDA approval. This will also assure that students coming from locations where access to health care and/or vaccine availability may be limited (or where FDA-approved vaccines are not available) can be vaccinated as soon as they arrive. [ACHA Recommends COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements for Fall 2021](#)
- 2) **Surveillance Testing:** Require campuses to continue mandatory surveillance testing of all unvaccinated staff and students on a weekly basis this fall. Allow fully vaccinated staff and students who voluntarily disclose vaccination status to be excused from weekly surveillance testing. Continue surveillance testing of fully vaccinated individuals on a significantly less frequent sampling basis to monitor for break through infections.

NOTE: Continued mandatory surveillance testing will require extension and modification of the current UUP/SUNY mandatory testing agreement to accommodate differential testing and address employee privacy concerns.

- 3) **Ventilation/air filtration:** It is now clear, airborne exposure indoors, particularly in poorly ventilated spaces, is the primary way COVID is transmitted. Given this, improving ventilation and air filtration to the extent possible is critical. Campuses should be required to assess adequacy of ventilation in campus buildings, particularly in shared workspaces, classrooms, and other public spaces where students and/or staff congregate. Following such assessment, campuses should be required to engage in reasonable mitigation efforts to improve inadequate ventilation. Joint labor/management walk throughs should be conducted to review concerns about ventilation adequacy. Follow CDC guidance on strategies for improving ventilation and air filtration. [Ventilation in Buildings | CDC](#). See also WHO guidance, [Roadmap to improve and ensure good indoor ventilation in the context of COVID-19 \(who.int\)](#)
- 4) **Mask requirements:** Continue mandatory mask requirements in all indoor settings (other than in dorm rooms or private offices) regardless of vaccination status or social distancing. Masks remain a critical tool for assuring that all members of our communities are protected regardless of vaccination status.

While the state has relaxed mandated mask requirements for fully vaccinated individuals, masks are still required for unvaccinated individuals. In addition, the NYS Department of Health “strongly recommends” continuing mask wearing requirements in indoor settings where vaccination status of all individuals is unknown. Enforcing such divergent rules on campuses will be complex at best.

UUP does not support proposals to segregate shared workspaces, classrooms, or other indoor spaces where staff and students congregate based on vaccination status. Doing so raises privacy issues for employees and students who are not vaccinated due to religious or medical exemptions or who are fully vaccinated but continue to mask and social distance on medical advice as additional precaution due to high-risk medical conditions. Instead, UUP supports continuing indoor mask requirements in these spaces, as recommended by NYS DOH, as the vaccination status of individuals using these spaces is, and should remain, unknown. [NYS CDC Guidance Summary.pdf](#)

- 5) **Social distancing:** Require ongoing compliance with best practices re: social distancing. While the state may be relaxing social distancing requirements for fully vaccinated individuals, it will remain the case, at least for the near future, that shared office areas, classrooms, and other areas where our members work remain environments where vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals intermingle. Given this, social distanced arrangements in workspaces (including classrooms) should continue until such time as science demonstrates that they can be safely relaxed for everyone, not just for the fully vaccinated. See e.g., [Offices, Real Estate, Buildings: Industry Guidance | New York Forward \(ny.gov\)](#) and [Education, Child Care, Camps: Industry Guidance | New York Forward \(ny.gov\)](#)

- 6) **Requirement of vaccination or recent negative test:** Campuses should require students, faculty, and staff to demonstrate either fully vaccinated status or surveillance testing compliance to attend campus activities such as athletic events, dances, concerts, performances, or other **voluntary** campus activities that involve in-person gatherings. This requirement should not be applied to staff who must attend such events as part of their professional obligation. Documentation to support admission should be verified in a manner that protects privacy and does not create a permanent record of individual vaccination status. (See e.g., Excelsior Pass, [NY State Excelsior Pass](#))
  
- 7) **Telecommuting pilot:** UUP supports continuation of the telecommuting pilot program through the fall. We understand that, with expanding vaccination rates, it may no longer be necessary to continue full-time telecommuting arrangements for large numbers of staff. However, over the last year, employees across the system have demonstrated that it is possible to successfully complete all, or significant parts, of their professional obligations from home. Even if campuses are “fully open”, social distancing should continue. Part-time or hybrid telecommuting arrangements (e.g., 3 days in the office, 2 days at home) can continue to be important tools for decreasing density on campuses. Continued telecommuting options can also be valuable for promoting recruitment and retention, addressing sustainability goals, and potentially reducing office space and parking needs.
  
- 8) **Include union representation in planning:** Require inclusion of UUP campus-level representatives in campus health & safety planning groups. This is critical for assuring that campus plans address employee concerns, assuring employee buy in to campus plans and voluntary vaccination campaigns, and reassuring staff who are fearful of returning in person that their safety will be protected.

Thank you to the UUP Ad Hoc Health and Safety Committee for their assistance in developing these guidelines.