



Dr. Jim Malatras

Chancellor

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MEMORANDUM

To: Presidents

From: Jim Malatras, Chancellor

Date: July 7, 2021; revised July 8, 2021

Re: Final COVID Protocols for the 2021 Summer and Fall Semester¹

On June 15, 2021, the Governor announced that all state-mandated COVID-19 health and safety restrictions were lifted effective immediately as 70 percent of New Yorkers age 18 or older have received at least the first dose of their COVID-19 vaccination series. Shortly thereafter, the Governor announced that on June 24, 2021 New York ended the state disaster emergency declared for the COVID pandemic on March 7, 2020.

The State's required health guidance and New York Forward industry specific guidelines, including that for institutions of higher education—including social gathering limits, capacity restrictions, social distancing, cleaning and disinfection, health screening, and contact information for tracing—are now lifted. All previously issued NYS higher education guidance is now [archived](#).

New York State has eliminated restrictions for all fully vaccinated individuals and refers unvaccinated individuals to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance. Even after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) fully approves a vaccine and a vaccination mandate for students is implemented, campuses will have to manage hybrid populations consisting of vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. Campuses should continue to refer to Section 3 of the CDC's guidance for [Institutions of Higher Education](#) as things continue to change. System Administration will also continue to review best practices and provide support to campuses.

In developing the modified guidance below, we have for several months been in constant communication and consultation with various stakeholders for their guidance and input, including federal, state and SUNY health experts; our campus leadership (including faculty and student organizations); CUNY and other partners in higher education; labor unions; and the Governor's Office and its Office of Employee Relations, among others. Based on this variety of perspectives and experience – and adhering in particular to the evolving federal and state health guidance – our Guidance will ensure our ability to bring our students back to campus in a safe environment.

¹ For the purposes of this memorandum, the term semester is defined to include all academic term lengths offered at SUNY campuses.



State University of New York COVID-19 Guidance for the Summer 2021 and Fall 2021 Semesters

Summer and Fall 2021 COVID-19 Guidance

As a matter of course, we are returning to pre-pandemic campus activity. The SUNY community has done an extraordinary job over the course of the pandemic, but now, given the low positivity rates and increasing vaccination rates, it is incumbent upon us that we strive to provide a more robust academic and residential experience for our students.

Despite the new flexibility, each campus remains responsible for the use of discretion to impose additional requirements as described herein, and to monitor and enforce compliance with all requirements across the campus community. These updated protocols are subject to change as COVID-related conditions evolve. In addition, nothing herein limits the authority of campuses to impose additional COVID regulations within its current authority if not enumerated in the following guidance. Campuses must continue to comply with any additional requirements imposed by SUNY and local health departments.

I. Masks and Social Distancing

Pursuant to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, fully vaccinated individuals (i.e. students², faculty, and staff³) are not required to maintain social distancing or wear masks, while unvaccinated individuals are responsible for continuing to wear a mask and practice social distancing in all locations.

Individuals 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. According to the CDC, [multiple factors](#) should be considered for managing environments where 100 percent of the population is not fully vaccinated. Ideally, consideration would be given to both the direct campus population as well as the surrounding community. The primary factors to consider include: (1) level of

² Students are defined as any individual matriculated or otherwise enrolled full-time or part-time at SUNY Facilities as well as visiting, auditing, exchange, continuing education, and international students taking in-person courses at SUNY. The definition of students does not include high school students enrolled in courses at a campus. See Section XIV below for more information regarding high school students.

³ Staff includes all employees working on campus—State, Research Foundation, Campus Foundation, contractors, etc.

community transmission of COVID-19; (2) COVID-19 vaccination coverage, including among students, faculty, and staff; (3) implementation of a robust, frequent SARS-CoV-2 screening testing program with high participation from the unvaccinated campus population; and (4) any local COVID-19 outbreaks or increasing trends. Therefore, the following guidance applies:

- *Vaccinated individuals.* Fully vaccinated individuals are not required to wear a mask or socially distance on campus. Pursuant to CDC guidance, nothing herein prohibits fully vaccinated individuals from continuing the use of masks.
- *Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated individuals.* Individuals who are not vaccinated or fully vaccinated are responsible for continuing to wear masks on campus and should, where practicable, continue to observe social distancing in indoor settings, such as instructional space (e.g., classrooms, laboratories, studios).
- *Campus discretion.* Campuses may impose additional mask wearing requirements and additional terms or restrictions within the instructional setting (e.g. no eating or drinking) above and beyond the CDC guidance. If so, the campus must work with campus stakeholders in development of any additional changes and broadly communicate the policy to the entire college community.
- *Special consideration.* Pursuant to the CDC, “A person with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.)” may submit a request to the campus for consideration of an exemption from mask wearing based on a medical accommodation, regardless of vaccination status.
- *Community transmission.* Additional requirements may be imposed by the campus or System Administration based upon the increasing COVID-19 transmission rates on campus.

II. Large Event Capacity Limits

The State of New York’s COVID-19 restrictions remain in effect for large-scale indoor event venues—now defined as indoor venues that hold more than 5,000 attendees. Consistent with the State’s implementation of the CDC guidelines, proof of vaccination can be used to eliminate social distancing and remove masks for fully vaccinated individuals. Unvaccinated or unknown vaccination status individuals who are over the age of four must continue to present proof of a recent negative diagnostic COVID-19 test result and wear masks within the venue. However, social distancing can be reduced or eliminated between tested attendees, allowing venues to reach 100 percent capacity in all sections.

III. Mandatory Vaccination for Students and Vaccination Management System

The State of New York [directed](#) that the public universities mandate COVID vaccinations for students, upon the federal government's full approval of the vaccine. To that end, the Board of Trustees passed a [resolution](#) delegating the implementation of the mandatory vaccination policy to the Chancellor. The Chancellor's draft policy has been distributed to campuses and will be finalized after the campus comment period.

System Administration is developing a System-wide solution for all campuses to track verified vaccination status of SUNY students. Currently, the target date for operation is August 1, 2021. Campuses will be required to utilize this system which will be driven by student consent and will use available authoritative sources - the NYS and NYC immunization systems – to verify vaccination status. Students vaccinated outside the State of New York will be required to submit appropriate documentation to the campus. System administration will work with campuses to integrate any existing systems into the new centralized vaccination management system.

IV. Daily Health Screening

Daily health screenings are no longer required for vaccinated individuals. Campuses *may* continue to screen all individuals for (1) COVID-19 symptoms, (2) recent close contacts, and (3) recent positive COVID-19 test result, regardless of individual vaccination status. Screening may be performed via signage, by e-mail/website, by telephone, or by electronic survey. Temperature checks are no longer required as a part of health screening. Campuses should continue to encourage students, faculty, and staff to perform daily self-health screenings for infectious illnesses, including COVID-19. Anyone with signs or symptoms of infectious illness should stay home when sick and/or seek medical care.

V. Mandatory Pause Requirements

The [NYS requirements](#) for a mandatory pause are no longer in effect. However, System Administration retains the authority to pause campus activities in cases of increased community transmission.

VI. Cleaning Protocols

The New York State mandatory cleaning and disinfection protocols are no longer in effect. However, it is highly recommended that campuses clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces, such as common areas and shared workstations, at least once a day and regularly clean and disinfect other surfaces as necessary given the level of traffic and type of individuals who use the space and general risk of community transmission of COVID-19. Campuses must provide hand hygiene stations or supplies within workplaces for individuals to use; specifically, hand washing, such as soap, running water or disposable towels or hand sanitizing, such as alcohol-based sanitizer with 60 percent or more alcohol where hand washing may not be available or practical.

VII. Ventilation and Air Filtration

Campuses should increase outdoor airflow and ventilation rates in indoor settings to the extent compatible with individual comfort and safety and in accordance with building codes and standards, as well as applicable lease, contract, or other use agreement requirements; in indoor areas where air is recirculated, should consider higher rated filtration within HVAC systems as supported by the filter rack and air handling system so long as the system can perform to the level of heating and cooling that it was able to provide prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency; and consider other appropriate indoor air quality measures, such as portable fans, filters, and air cleaners.

VIII. Telecommuting Policies

Each State-operated campus must inform employees that the statewide telecommuting pilot program expired in its current form on July 2, 2021. System Administration is working with the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) and campuses on a system-wide telecommuting policy that will be submitted to the State for review and approval. This is an ongoing process and the policy is still in development.

IX. COVID-19 Testing

The goal is to get every individual vaccinated. Until that point, mandatory weekly testing will continue to be required for any person⁴ who has a physical presence on campus and who has not been fully vaccinated or who has not shown proof of vaccination. Fully vaccinated students and employees (including auxiliary workers and vendors with a regular on-campus presence) may opt-out 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).

Subject to final New York State guidance, COVID-19 vaccines recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) may now be accepted for purposes of [determining vaccination status](#). See: [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) | WHO - Prequalification of Medical Products \(IVDs, Medicines, Vaccines and Immunization Devices, Vector Control\)](#).

- *Symptomatic Cases*. Diagnostic (PCR) testing of all symptomatic persons, including vaccinated persons who display COVID-related symptoms, will continue. Campuses may choose to require more frequent surveillance testing of individuals, regardless of vaccination status.
- *Contractors and Vendors*. Campuses should continue with the process currently in place for contractors and outside vendors.

⁴ The mandatory testing agreements with faculty and staff expired on June 30, 2021. New agreements were signed by UUP, [CSEA](#), PEF, NYSCOPBA, and PBANYS to extend the agreement through December 2021. [\[Revised July 8, 2021\]](#)

- *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 done or is anticipated to be done.
- *Noncompliance.* Any incidents of non-compliance with campus testing will continue to be handled through the individual Campus Code of Conduct for students and Human Resources for employees.
- *Additional Testing.* Campuses may impose more frequent testing of students and employees, regardless of vaccination status, if conditions warrant additional measures. SUNY Upstate Medical University has developed additional protocols that may be used by campuses.

X. Pre-Semester Testing and Quarantine

At a minimum, unvaccinated students must provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test taken within the past (5) days prior to arriving on campus at the start of their semester/term. In lieu of a negative test, unvaccinated students will need to quarantine for at least ten (10) days prior to or upon arrival at campus and attest to the campus that they did so. Campuses have the discretion to impose additional requirements (e.g. campuses may require a negative COVID-19 test within the past three (3) days as opposed to five (5) days and/or campuses may also require both quarantine and a test).

XI. Residence Halls, Quarantine and Isolation Space

Campuses should plan for a higher occupancy of residence halls in the fall semester while implementing precautions for unvaccinated students who return to campus. Campuses may enact housing regulations and policies based on vaccination status as long as the campus complies with the exemption requirements outlined in New York State Public Health Law Section 2165. Campuses should plan to maintain a reasonable portion of the rooms previously held or have access to space off campus for quarantine and isolation uses. 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.

XII. Uniform Sanctioning Compliance Guidance

The Uniform Sanctioning Compliance Guidance, issued on September 25, 2020, was sunset and is no longer in effect. The flexibility to enforce such guidance is 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.

XIII. Academic Calendar

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

XIV. 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.

XV. Visitors

Campuses may use their discretion in allowing visitors but must follow any additional New York State or local health guidelines on capacity limits or other requirements.

XVI. 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.

XVII. Travel

Campuses should follow current NYSDOH guidance on testing, vaccination, and quarantine requirements related to travel.