

HPU students to return next week

University shapes COVID-19 plan for upcoming semester

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HIGH POINT — Leaders at High Point University say they do not plan to require masks or vaccinations despite

the recent spike in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations as a new semester prepares to kick off.

Students resume classes Monday for the second

semester of the 2021-22 academic year. Since in-person classes resumed in August 2020 after instruction went remote at the outset of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, HPU has maintained instruction on campus while keeping new COVID-19 cases at a minimal level.

Shortly after the pandemic

took hold locally, HPU President Nido Qubein formed a task force that addressed how to limit COVID-19 cases on campus, and those measures will continue, the university said in a statement to The High Point Enterprise.

“This spring, we remain committed to once again balancing the importance

of in-person learning and on-campus living with the health and safety of our campus community, while respecting the diversity of health care decisions everyone must make,” the statement said.

University officials say

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they will continue to abide by any government mask requirements. The Guilford County Board of Commissioners, in its role as the county health board, is scheduled to consider a resumption of a countywide mask mandate at a meeting Jan. 13, four days after the start of the new semester.

A similar scenario played out last year. HPU began the first semester without a mask requirement, but the county adopted one shortly after classes began last August. When the county dropped the mandate in mid-November, HPU went back to voluntary mask-wearing.

In terms of vaccinations, university officials say they follow the guidance of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, which strongly recommends that colleges encourage everyone to be vaccinated but doesn't say that they must mandate it.

"The university will share vaccination opportunities with those who want one," HPU said.

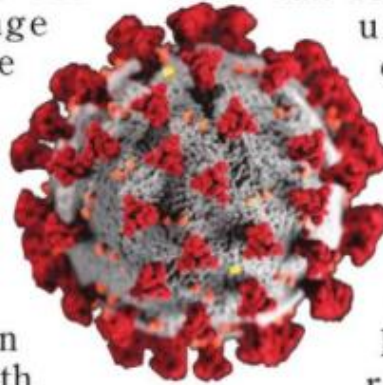
Many universities announced after the surge driven by the omicron variant that they would either delay the start of classes, switch to remote learning for a while or require vaccinations, but HPU's state-

ment gave no indication of any such contingency plans.

"Positive cases of COVID-19 remained both low and stable during the fall semester, and the university has established processes in place to support the health and well-being of the university community,"

HPU said. "We remain vigilant in accommodating any of our

students who may need to quarantine by providing a comfortable location, dining accommodations and health care if needed."



COVID-19

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High Point University students make their way to classes in this April 2021 photograph. HPU leaders are preparing to continue to counter COVID as the new semester starts next week.