



## Spring 2022 – Principles for Safe Return

As the Spring 2022 semester begins, the spread of the Omicron variant presents new challenges for assuring that our campus communities remain safe. Given the breathtakingly rapid spread of Omicron and the reality of Omicron-driven breakthrough infections among fully vaccinated individuals, we must remain vigilant and multi-layered mitigation strategies must be continued to protect against campus outbreaks.

To best assure that our campuses are safe and to reassure faculty, staff, and students who have renewed concerns about returning to in-person settings, aggressive vaccination campaigns must be coupled with continued health and safety protocols which remain in place even with widespread vaccination of our campus communities.

- 1) **Delayed Semester Start:** The first day of classes for the Spring, 2022 semester should be delayed until January 25<sup>th</sup>, across all campuses. Such a mandated delayed start will allow for additional students, faculty and staff to be boosted while also allowing for the Omicron spike to diminish. Should it be necessary, campuses should – in consultation with faculty governance and union representatives – cancel Spring Break to allow for a timely end to the semester.
- 2) **Vaccination:** UUP remains willing to partner with SUNY on vaccination campaigns to encourage everyone who is not yet fully vaccinated or boosted to do so. This should include providing for vaccination pop-up clinics on campuses to assure easy access to vaccination. In addition:
  - a. The definition of "fully vaccinated" should be expanded ASAP to include booster shots. Once this occurs, booster shots should be mandated for eligible students and would be required to establish fully vaccinated status for faculty and staff who are subject to the memorandum of understanding on mandatory vaccination or testing.
  - b. Students returning on campus this spring who are eligible to receive booster shots and have not yet received them must be offered the opportunity to receive their booster shot immediately upon arrival.
- 3) **Return to campus testing:** Given the speed at which Omicron is spreading and the reality of breakthrough infections, it is critical that all students and staff (regardless of vaccination status) be subject to return to campus testing. This should include

- a. Pre-arrival testing of students no more than 3 days prior to move-in or orientation
- b. Entry testing of students at time of move-in or orientation
- c. Testing of all academic faculty and staff immediately prior to student move-in or orientation.

[Updated COVID-19 Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education \(acha.org\); Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education \(IHEs\) | CDC](#)

- 4) **Surveillance Testing:** Campuses must continue mandatory surveillance testing of unvaccinated staff and students on a weekly basis. [COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing ETS \(osha.gov\)](#) In addition, campuses must be required to continue surveillance testing of fully vaccinated students, faculty, and staff. Given the extreme transmissibility of the Omicron variant, surveillance testing of vaccinated individuals should be increased from a minimum of monthly to at least every 2 weeks on a rotating sampling basis. [Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education \(IHEs\) | CDC](#) In addition, voluntary testing must be made available to any students, faculty, or staff who desire to be tested, as often as they would like. Given the possibility of breakthrough infections, even fully vaccinated people must be eligible for voluntary on-site testing at all times that testing is available.
- 5) **Requirement of vaccination to attend voluntary campus activities:** Campuses should require students, faculty, and staff to demonstrate fully vaccinated status, including a booster shot if eligible, to attend campus activities such as athletic events, dances, concerts, performances, or other voluntary student activities that involve in-person gatherings. Documentation to support admission should be verified in a manner that protects privacy and does not create a permanent record. (See e.g., Excelsior Pass, [NY State Excelsior Pass](#))
- 6) **Mask requirements:** Continue mandatory mask requirements indoors (other than in dorm rooms or in private offices) regardless of vaccination status or social distancing. Continue mandatory mask requirements outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained. Assure campus enforcement of mask requirements. [2.60-determination-12.10.21.pdf \(ny.gov\); Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education \(IHEs\) | CDC](#)
- 7) **Telecommuting pilot:** Campuses must proactively and aggressively utilize the telecommuting pilot program wherever possible throughout the spring semester. Reducing density in on-campus office and work sites is once again necessary to respond to Omicron. While we understand that the goal remains keeping campuses “fully open”, more liberal utilization of telecommuting is not antithetical to that. Over the last two years, employees across the system have demonstrated that it is possible to successfully complete all, or significant parts, of their professional obligations from home. Part-time or hybrid telecommuting

arrangements (e.g., 3 days in the office, 2 days at home) -- even for staff in forward facing positions -- are critical tools both for decreasing density, promoting recruitment and retention, addressing sustainability goals, and potentially reducing office space and parking needs.

- 8) **Ventilation/air filtration:** It is remains clear that airborne exposure indoors, particularly in poorly ventilated spaces, is the primary way in which COVID is transmitted. Given this, expanding efforts to improve ventilation and air filtration to the extent possible remains a must. 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 implement all reasonable mitigation efforts to improve inadequate ventilation. Follow CDC guidance on strategies for improving ventilation and air filtration. [Ventilation in Buildings | CDC](#). See also, [Roadmap to improve and ensure good indoor ventilation in the context of COVID-19 \(who.int\)](#)
- 9) **Include union representation in planning:** Require inclusion of UUP campus level representatives in campus health & safety planning groups. This remains critical for assuring that campus plans address employee concerns, assuring employee buy in to campus plans and voluntary vaccination campaigns, and for reassuring staff who are fearful of retuning in person that their safety will be protected.