Significant Changes Related to COVID-19 – January 4, 2022

Rutgers Community Members,

I am writing to you today to inform you of important changes to how we will start the new semester, including the temporary use of remote instruction where possible, critical new vaccine requirements, and other important updates to our operating status. These important changes will affect you and every member of the university community.

It is essential that every member of the Rutgers community be familiar with this information.

The data and the science surrounding the surge in COVID-19 cases, and the dramatic spread of the Omicron variant, require that we adapt to the evolving situation without sacrificing our goal of returning to a campus experience that is robust, rewarding, and safe. To do so, we are implementing appropriate contingency plans that rely on today’s best available information and expertise so that we may continue to manage the impact of this virus at the university.

Rutgers Remains Open; Return to the Office Is Now January 31, 2022

The university, all clinics, libraries, and research operations continue to remain open. However, the previously announced pause of the in-person return to campus for employees has been extended through Sunday, January 30, 2022. Vice presidents, deans, and directors are asked to assess their operations and to encourage all employees who can telecommute to please do so in accordance with the clarification of the Telecommuting Policy relaxation described in Senior Vice President for Human Resources Vivian Fernández’s December 3, 2021, email. In-person schedules for employees are expected to resume on Monday, January 31, 2022.

Employees typically deemed essential should continue to report as currently scheduled unless notified otherwise by their supervisors.

Employee Vaccination and Booster Requirement

The university continues to require all employees to be vaccinated or have an approved medical or religious exemption. These complete records must be uploaded to the Rutgers Vaccination Portal by January 4, 2022.

In addition, all employees, except those with previously approved medical or religious exemptions, will be required to receive a vaccine booster and upload proof of same. A follow-up email on this topic will be sent later this week to all employees. More information on scheduling a vaccine booster is available here.

Student Vaccine Booster Requirement

We are now requiring that all vaccinated students obtain a booster vaccination as soon as eligible. Eligibility for a booster is defined as six months after the last mRNA vaccine or two months after a J&J
vaccine. Those students who are now eligible must obtain a vaccine booster by January 31, 2022, and proof of the booster must be uploaded to the vaccine portal by that date. Students residing on campus are strongly encouraged to upload their status by January 15, 2022. More information on scheduling a booster at the university can be found here. Students with approved medical or religious exemptions are excused from the booster requirement.

Spring Semester

Where possible, in-person classes will temporarily convert to remote classes through Sunday, January 30, 2022. In-person classes and associated services will resume on Monday, January 31, 2022. Deans and chairs will work with their respective chancellor offices to assure an orderly transition and communicate their plans directly with students.

Return to Housing

The return to housing has been moved from January 16 and 17 to January 29 and 30. Please note that students will not have access to residence halls until January 29, 2022. This schedule modification does not apply to full-year, RBHS, and international student contracts, which will remain in place and unchanged. Students with extenuating circumstances should reach out to their respective campus Residence Life office for potential accommodations. Information on any financial credits or offsets will be forthcoming. Students returning to housing must have received a booster, when eligible, and are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test within 72 hours prior to their arrival. At-home COVID-19 tests may be accessed for free here or at local county sites here.

Dining

Dining facilities will remain open for to-go service only. Normal operating service will commence on Monday, January 31, 2022.

Student Quarantine and Isolation

Students in on-campus housing who test positive or have a confirmed exposure are strongly encouraged and—if the university deems it necessary—may be required to quarantine or isolate at home during a quarantine period.

Employee Quarantine and Isolation

In accordance with the revised CDC guidelines, employees diagnosed with COVID-19 should isolate for five days. Asymptomatic employees or employees whose symptoms are resolving, may return to work, fully masked, following the isolation period.

The CDC recommends that employees with a suspected close contact or exposure who are more than six months from their second mRNA dose (or more than two months after the J&J vaccine) and are not yet
boosted should quarantine for five days followed by continued face covering. Individuals who have received their booster shots do not need to quarantine following an exposure.

These guidelines are subject to change based on CDC and NJDOH guidelines.

Events

We currently anticipate that in-person events will resume on Monday, January 31, 2022. At that time, all event attendees will be required to show proof of full vaccination (two mRNA doses or the single J&J) or a COVID-19 negative PCR test taken within 72 hours of the event and must remain compliant with the published COVID-19 protocols.

Athletic Events

Proof of full vaccination (two mRNA doses or the single J&J) or a COVID-19 negative PCR test within 72 hours is required by all those attending athletics events. Face coverings are required at all times and concession sales are now limited to water and soft drinks only.

Testing

Employees and students who are residents of the State of New Jersey can receive free at-home testing through the state. Information is available at https://learn.vaulthealth.com/nj/ or by checking with their local county public health offices regarding available free testing sites. Similar programs are available to employees who reside in states other than New Jersey. Please check with your state and/or local health agencies for further information.

Beginning immediately, employees whose presence on campus is required may access free weekly testing at the university through January 31, 2022. Information is available here.

On-Campus Protocols and Safety Tips

Established procedures for on-campus activities will continue.

- Libraries and computer labs will remain open to RUID card holders. The libraries will provide contactless and remote services until January 31, 2022. Hours of operation, determined at the campus level, may vary.
- Recreation, student, and campus centers are limited to persons with RUID cards.
- Use of face coverings while in indoor settings is mandatory, unless seated alone in an enclosed office or at a designated work station.
- Self-screening using the My Campus Pass is still required.
- Using common sense and doing your part of our shared responsibilities continues to be important.
Information regarding university protocols and other essential information can be found in the Guide to Returning to Rutgers.

The health and safety of our community remains our top priority. Protocols will change as we consult with public health agencies and assess data, including the number of positive cases in New Jersey, COVID-19 hospitalizations, state and regional hospital capacity, and the severity of the dominant variant. Please continue to look for updates at https://coronavirus.rutgers.edu.

Wishing you a very happy and healthy new year and asking you to please remain vigilant and safe.

Antonio M. Calcado
Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer
antonio.calcado@rutgers.edu | 848.445.2474