



The Commission on
INDEPENDENT
Colleges & Universities
in New York

Considerations for Safe Campus Operations

2021-22 Academic Year



Dear Colleagues,

As campuses prepare to reopen for the 2021-22 academic year amid ongoing concern about increasing COVID-19 infections and the emergence of the Delta variant, the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities has worked with a public health consultant to compile best practices and recommendations for consideration by our member colleges and universities.

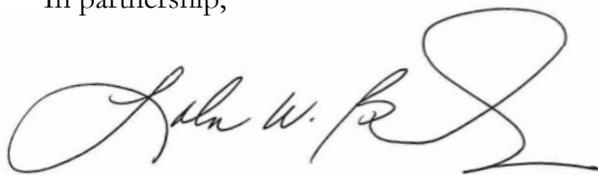
New York State's public health emergency expired on June 24, 2021 and the state's reopening guidance for higher education was archived as of June 15, 2021, and is no longer in effect. However, colleges and universities may still be subject to active New York State guidance for large-scale performing arts and public transportation, as well as local COVID-19 requirements, including New York City's vaccine mandate.

This document is intended to help colleges and universities across New York build on the lessons learned during the 2020-21 academic year and incorporate best practices and guidance from state and federal sources into their operational plans. The considerations below are drawn from guidance issued by the CDC, NCAA, New York State, and consultation with a public health expert.

New York's 100+ private, not-for-profit colleges and universities are committed to providing a rich educational experience for students while also maintaining safe environments for students, faculty, staff, and their surrounding communities. The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities is proud to represent these leading institutions and support their efforts to keep their communities safe and strong while moving into the next academic year. Through even the most challenging times, we continue to advocate on behalf of our member institutions and the Independent sector at large.

Should you have questions or comments, please contact me.

In partnership,



Lola W. Brabham
President

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Testing

The current recommendation for all college and university campuses is to strongly consider a mandatory testing program for all students, faculty, and staff immediately upon returning to campus, regardless of vaccination status⁶.

Supporting Facts

- Double entry testing — requiring a recent negative test before entering, or immediately upon arrival to, campus and a repeat negative test 3-5 days after returning to campus — would provide an additional layer of protection and should also be considered.
- Colleges and universities should consider implementing surveillance testing for high-risk campus groups (e.g. student athletes), per CDC⁷ and NCAA guidance.⁸

Additional Guidance

- If testing the entire campus population upon re-entry is not possible, consider prioritizing those students who are returning to campus from areas of substantial or high transmission⁹.
- Consider implementing re-entry testing requirements for holidays and breaks.
- Testing procedures should be designed to ensure results are received quickly enough to facilitate contact tracing, quarantine, and isolation, as needed — ideally within 24-48 hours of sample collection.
- Require routine surveillance testing for unvaccinated students, faculty, and staff, including individuals with a valid exemption. Consider implementing surveillance testing of vaccinated individuals to identify breakthrough infections, especially in areas with substantial or high transmission.
- Develop and put a plan in place to provide testing of all symptomatic individuals, especially in the event of an outbreak on campus.

⁶ https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/ihe-testing.html#anchor_1615910575259

⁷ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/considerations.html#section4>

⁸ https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ssi/COVID/SSI_ResocializationFall2021.pdf

⁹ <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

Masks

The current recommendation for all college and university campuses is to follow updated CDC guidance¹⁰ recommending all individuals wear masks indoors in areas of substantial or high transmission,¹¹ regardless of their vaccination status.

Additional Guidance

Campuses are strongly encouraged to implement policies in line with CDC guidance which:

- Permit vaccinated individuals to refrain from masking in outdoor settings and in indoor settings when alone or with members of their household (e.g. with roommates or suitemates).
- Require masking, regardless of vaccination status, at outdoor events where distancing is not possible (e.g. athletic competitions).

Events

The current recommendation for all college and university campuses is to review policies for indoor gatherings on campus for the fall.

Additional Guidance

Campuses are strongly encouraged to implement policies that require:

- Proof of vaccination and/or recent negative test for all events.
- Adjusting event plans to reduce capacity and promote additional distancing, especially in indoor venues where attendees will not all be fully vaccinated.
- Universal masking at outdoor events where distancing is not possible.

¹⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

¹¹ <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

Quarantine and Isolation

The current recommendation for all college and university campuses is to have a plan in place for symptomatic individuals to isolate and for exposed individuals to quarantine.

Additional Guidance

Campuses are strongly encouraged to follow:

- CDC's updated quarantine guidance¹² for vaccinated individuals who are exposed and show no symptoms, which requires testing 3-5 days after exposure and mask wearing indoors for 14 days after exposure or until negative test result is received.
- CDC guidance¹³ on quarantine and isolation for unvaccinated individuals who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Pausing In-Person Activities

Colleges and universities should consider metrics (e.g. infection rates on campus or in the surrounding community) that would necessitate implementing movement restrictions or other short-term mitigation measures or pausing in-person activities on campus. New York State's requirements for mandatory switches to remote instruction are no longer in effect.

Additional Transmission Mitigation Strategies

- Limit visitors to campus until your area is experiencing low levels of community transmission, and put mandatory vaccine and/or testing requirements in place for visitors.
- Continue practices designed to increase ventilation and improve air filtration.
- Limit occupancy of high-risk campus facilities including gyms and dining halls.
- Review travel policies to limit unnecessary travel and require testing consistent with CDC recommendations based on vaccination status.¹⁴
- Require regular symptom screening for students, faculty, and staff.

¹² https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html#anchor_1617376555813

¹³ https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fif-you-are-sick%2Fisolation.html

¹⁴ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Resources

The following resources may be useful to colleges and universities as they make their reopening plans for the 2021-22 academic year:

- American College Health Association (ACHA): [Considerations for Reopening Institutions of Higher Education for the Fall Semester 2021](#)
- CDC: [COVID-19 Data Tracker](#) (includes county-by-county transmission map)
- CDC: [COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit for Institutions of Higher Education](#)
- CDC: [Domestic Travel During COVID-19](#)
- CDC: [Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People](#)
- CDC: [International Travel During COVID-19](#)
- CDC: [Operating Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education \(IHEs\)](#)
- EEOC: [Updated COVID-19 Technical Assistance](#)
- NCAA: [Resocialization of Collegiate Sport: 2021 Fall Training and Competition](#)
- NYS: [COVID-19 Testing Information](#)
- NYS: [COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#)

CICU is grateful to Brad Hutton, Public Health Consultant at Hutton Health Strategies, for providing recommendations and insight during the creation of these considerations for safe campus operations. He has helped many CICU member institutions manage outbreaks on campus, implement policies for testing, and initiate vaccination mandates. Brad also has experience with many other campus-specific COVID-19 policies. He can be reached at bhuttonhealth@gmail.com.