

Chancellor's Update for August 8, 2021

I hope you are well and were able to get some much-needed rest and relaxation over the summer. It has been several months since the last COVID-19 Update, so I would like to let you know where we stand with our plans and decision-making as we begin the new academic year.

The District continues to prioritize health and safety in all of its decision-making. Over the summer, the Chancellor's Cabinet, in consultation with the COVID Advisory Taskforce, Return to Onsite Activities Workgroup, collective bargaining representatives, and other stakeholders, has closely followed the spread of the Delta variant. We have been in regular contact with federal, state, and local public health officials to monitor the local situation. As we watch cases rise, primarily among unvaccinated individuals, it affirms the cautious approach taken by the District with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic generally and our return to on-site activities in particular.

PHASING-IN THE RETURN TO ON-SITE ACTIVITIES

The District is moving ahead with plans to safely reopen its campuses as we transition during the fall semester and prepare for the return to regular in-person operations by January 2022. To assist with the transition to on-site operations, air filtration systems in every District building have been upgraded. All employees and students are being required to wear face coverings while on-site to ensure we all do our part to keep each other safe. The District will provide face coverings to employees, students, and other visitors as needed, including N-95 masks upon request. In addition, employees must conduct a self-assessment before coming to work and should stay home and contact their supervisor if they have COVID-related symptoms.

The recent increases in COVID-19 infection rates in San Diego County, including among fully vaccinated individuals, has required us to reconsider the safety protocols for resuming onsite work. As described in more detail below, unvaccinated employees and students will be required to be tested for COVID-19 weekly. As a reminder, here are the relevant dates from the phased-in return to on-site activities outlined in Vice Chancellor Greg Smith's July 1st email:

Beginning July 1, all fully vaccinated employees who have submitted the required forms to Human Resources may resume working on-site. Unvaccinated employees who have an approved exemption from Human Resources may also resume working on-site. Employees who have been working on-site throughout the pandemic will continue to work on-site.

Beginning August 16, employees who have been working remotely may be required to return to on-site work up to two (2) days per week, regardless of vaccination status. Supervisors must give employees at least 10 days' notice before they are required to resume on-site work.

Beginning September 7, employees who have been working remotely may be required to return to on-site work up to four (4) days per week, regardless of vaccination

status. Supervisors must give employees at least 10 days' notice before they are required to increase the number of days of on-site work required.

Beginning September 20, employees who have been working remotely may be required to return to on-site work up to four (4) days per week, regardless of vaccination status. Supervisors must give employees at least 10 days' notice before they are required to increase the number of days of on-site work required.

The District will continue to monitor the local health situation and provide timely updates on any revisions to the reopening plan.

While employees may be required to return to work as outlined above, **supervisors are encouraged to work with employees to continue to provide remote work flexibilities, limit the number of people present in shared workspaces at the same time, and maximize physical distancing.**

If an employee can provide evidence that the place of care for an employee's dependent is closed or no longer available due to COVID-19, the timelines for return to on-site work may be extended. Supervisors must contact the Human Resources Division when notified by an employee of a COVID-19-related dependent care concern.

*****Supervisors are encouraged to give as much advanced notice as possible before requiring any employee to resume working on-site*****

VACCINATION AND TESTING REQUIREMENT PLANNING

We ask for your assistance as we encourage everyone who is eligible to be vaccinated. This is the best way to ensure the safety of all students, employees, and their loved ones. As of August 9th, nearly 2,300 District employees have submitted their vaccination status. I am happy to share that 90% of the respondents thus far have indicated that they are fully vaccinated. While these are encouraging numbers for a safe reopening of our District, the more infectious Delta variant is a serious threat to our ability to resume onsite operations. **As an added safety precaution, all employees who have not yet been vaccinated, will be required to be tested for COVID-19 each week beginning August 23rd. This requirement applies to all unvaccinated employees, regardless of remote or in-person work status.** The District will be providing onsite testing options or employees may choose to go to any available testing location. Vice Chancellor Smith will provide further details in an upcoming message.

Beyond our efforts to encourage employees to get vaccinated, **students attending in-person courses and individual appointments for services will also be required to provide proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test.** Combined with the face covering requirement, improvements to air filtration systems, and use physical distancing where appropriate, the testing requirement will allow us to resume limited in-person instruction and services in the fall safely.

All students enrolled in courses resuming with any in-person component in the fall semester have been required to submit proof of vaccination or a medical exemption.

As of August 10th, more than 6,000 students have been cleared for in-person instruction in the fall. This was not an easy decision since we know many of our students have not yet been vaccinated, however, it is essential to ensuring health and safety, especially given the rapid spread of the Delta variant. We, of course, are not alone in taking this stand having seen similar requirements issued by the University of California, California State University, and several other California Community Colleges. To encourage more students to get vaccinated, the District has launched a media campaign and the colleges are offering incentives to students. We especially appreciate the efforts of our student government leaders to encourage all students to get vaccinated. It is also important to mention our appreciation to The AFT Guild for its support and assistance with sharing information to employees.