



Joint Standing Committee on Education

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- COVID-19 Fall 2021 Update

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COVID Fall 2021

Plans for Fall Semester Covid Safety on Campus and in Clinical Facilities

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Fall 2021 Planning

- The HEPC Division of Health Sciences serves as higher education's representative to the JIATF.
- Fall 2021 planning began in May 2021 for all colleges and universities
- The HEPC Division of Health Sciences released guidance and FAQs consistent with CDC guidance to all colleges and universities throughout the summer to assist with planning
- Planning continued throughout the summer
- The increase in the Delta variant caused many campuses to revisit plans
- A table-top exercise was performed in mid August with JIATF and Higher Education representatives to evaluate capacity and plan for any surges on campuses due to the Delta variant.



Covid Testing Availability

- All schools have access to a statewide contract for saliva-based PCR test at low cost that was bid and awarded using state purchasing guidelines
- All schools have been provided with a small stock of rapid antigen-based tests from DHHR Emergency Command for use in case of surge (defined by DHHR Epidemiology)
- Schools have the choice to use any vendor they wish for tests
- A request for public assistance project has been opened by the HEPIC to be evaluated by FEMA for reimbursement of schools for saliva-based PCR tests purchased under the state contract
- Schools who purchase tests outside of the statewide contract can open their own projects at FEMA to be evaluated for reimbursement



Covid Testing Plans for Fall 2021

	Back to School testing offered or required	Surveillance testing offered or required
2 year CTCS (15 campuses)	7 campuses offering or requiring testing (8 still planning at time of survey)	12 campuses testing a percentage of unvaccinated students weekly or monthly
4 year HEPC (12 campuses)	10 offering or requiring testing	11 campuses testing a percentage of unvaccinated students weekly or monthly 1 testing only if unvaccinated contact or symptomatic



Vaccines

- Vaccines were coordinated through the HEPC and JIATF in Spring 2021—56,000 doses were administered from late December through early May to faculty, staff and students
- Vaccine orders are now available to colleges and universities through their own health centers (if applicable and they are an approved immunization provider) or through their local health departments or primary care partners for those without a health center
- No public 2-year or 4-year school has a vaccine mandate
- All campuses will offer vaccines on campus either via their health center or local partners this semester



Clinical Facility Vaccine Mandates

- Many clinical facilities have instituted vaccine mandates for their staff. These decisions have been made to keep patients safe while they pursue health care services. Our students are subject to the same policies as staff.
- All of our health sciences programs require clinical hands-on experiences for their students. Clinical experiences are a core and inseparable component of the coursework.
- If one or more of the academically necessary clinical assignments of the student cannot be made due to not providing proof of vaccination satisfactory to clinical sites, there is no assurance that an alternative academic accommodation will be possible; the student may be left with no alternative but to withdraw from the course(s).



What about third doses and boosters?

- Third doses for a narrowly defined group of immunocompromised patients were approved in mid August.
- All campuses have this guidance and are working with students, faculty, staff and their local health authorities to implement third doses for this group.
- Boosters are not yet authorized by the FDA or CDC. Once authorized (expect mid September), schools will begin offering boosts as recommended. Expected recommendation is that the boost occur 8 months after the second dose of either mRNA vaccine.
- All campuses have current guidance and once authorization is received, they will work to assure that all who wish to receive boosts do so.



Lessons learned from the 2020-2021 Academic year

- Many campuses reported increases after large parties, community based social events, and among athletes and Greek life
- Campus increases were frequently noted to co-occur with local community spread
- Many staff cases were reported as community or family member spread
- Changes to on campus activities worked last year when needed:
 - Pivoting to online classes for period of time
 - Halting athletic practices for period of time
 - Robust testing plans



Continued Plans for 2021-2022

- Attempts to overcome vaccine hesitancy, ready availability of vaccines for those who wish to be vaccinated
- Continuous monitoring of adequacy of quarantine and isolation space especially for unvaccinated students
- Rapid testing plans in case of surges
- Consider food service alternatives for local surges
- Work closely with LHDs, primary care, hospitals and EMS in case of any surge activity
- Keep our students safe.

