



The State University
of New York


Dr. Jim Malatras
Chancellor

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MEMORANDUM

To: SUNY Shared Governance/Stakeholders

From: Jim Malatras, Chancellor 

Re: 2021 Fall Semester

Date: April 12, 2021

The students, faculty, and staff at the State University of New York (SUNY) have done an extraordinary job managing a pandemic. Given the work of the entire SUNY community, our positivity rate over the past week is 0.26 percent versus the statewide rate of 3.4 percent. Now that New York State has opened vaccine eligibility to the entire SUNY community and our continued advocacy has resulted in increased allotments of the vaccine specifically for our students, we are turning the page on COVID-19.

As a result, SUNY is planning to allow in-person instruction for the Fall 2021 semester. Campuses must begin the planning stages now—and plan as they deem appropriate. Yet, given the changing guidance, we must be flexible as we plan to ensure that our college community is safe.

We want to hear from our various shared governance and stakeholders on how to plan and establish the baseline guidance for the Fall 2021 semester. Here are some basic areas that we are addressing:

- **Academic Calendar**. Because of the unprecedented uptick in cases and variants last fall, it was decided that campuses had to build their academic calendar later than historic practice. However, that was a one-time emergency situation that will not be carried forward. Campuses may return to their traditional calendars for the Fall 2021 semester.
- **Basic Health and Safety Guidance**. SUNY is still subject to federal and state guidance, depending on the issue. Working with a team of SUNY health experts, and chaired by Upstate President Dewan and Downstate President Reilly, we

need to determine what rules to incorporate, like CDC-issued spacing guidelines, masking in classrooms, residence halls rules, gathering sizes on campus, filtration systems, etc. Health and safety guidelines will remain in flux because the situation is, and will continue to be, fluid.

- **Study Abroad.** SUNY guidance for study abroad will be issued separately.
- **Testing.** Given not everyone may be vaccinated and that we need to monitor and provide scientific feedback on if the various variants are impacting the vaccines, SUNY will adopt a surveillance testing protocol for Fall 2021. However, it will likely be a much-reduced frequency protocol.
- **Uniform Compliance Guidance.** The Uniform Compliance Guidance will sunset at the end of the Spring 2021 semester barring no unforeseen circumstances.
- **Vaccines.** Right now, we are working to vaccinate as many students, faculty, and staff as possible. We are running various public awareness campaigns such as #ItsYourTurn to encourage vaccination with peer-to-peer messaging and #KnowYourVax, which includes PSAs in 11 languages to help combat vaccine myths and misinformation. We urge you to continue to share these campaigns with others in the SUNY community. If we do not see enough students, faculty, and staff getting vaccinated, we will consider a mandatory vaccine—subject to state law and authority. We will likely do surveys to get a sense of how many students are being vaccinated because we don't have good data on this point.

If there are specific areas of your campus operations that you believe should be highlighted in the guidance, please let us know.

The System Administration team will be reaching out to schedule meetings with you so we can have your input as we finalize the basic protocol. We thank you for all that you have done and are looking forward to a more robust campus experience.

