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Subj: Guidance on reconvening the campus community

Dear Members of the Notre Dame Community,

Excitement is in the air! We are looking forward to coming together again in person at the start of the new semester – especially given all that has transpired over the past arduous 18 months.

Even as we look forward to reconvening the campus community, recent developments related to the COVID-19 variants have led to new CDC guidelines and some adjustments to our campus policies. As always, we seek to craft policies and protocols that protect the health and safety of our Notre Dame and local communities while also continuing the University's critical work of teaching, learning, and research. In our planning, we have worked closely with Dr. Mark Fox, deputy health commissioner for St. Joseph County, as well as other public health officials, and have reviewed recent guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control. There have been conversations among senior leaders on Fr. Jenkins' President's Reopening Advisory Committee (PRAC), the deans of the colleges and schools, the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC), and Fr. Olinger's student advisory committee.

We write to provide some updates on plans for the fall semester. Please remember that with COVID, we must be prepared to adapt and change as circumstances evolve.

Running the numbers

Notre Dame requires all students, faculty, and staff to provide proof of full vaccination for COVID-19 or receive an official exemption from vaccination. **We are proud – and grateful – that 90% of our community has provided proof of vaccination, and 94% have either provided proof of vaccination or received an exemption.** We expect the percentage of fully vaccinated students, faculty, and staff will continue to rise in the weeks ahead.

We all saw case rates at Notre Dame drop dramatically in the spring semester as more and more people were vaccinated. We have had a total of 7 positive cases among 6,510 tests of students, faculty, and staff on campus throughout the entire summer.

Our policies and protocols are shaped by our very high vaccination rates on campus.

Vaccines

Public health data clearly indicate the likelihood of severe illness or hospitalization in those who are fully vaccinated is extremely [small](#). According to the CDC, 99.9% of COVID-19 hospitalizations in recent weeks have involved those who are not vaccinated. In addition, vaccines have been shown to be highly

effective at reducing the chance of infection. Vaccine breakthrough cases, though much discussed in the media, remain rare. We urge all of you who have not yet gotten vaccinated to do so as soon as possible. You can sign up for a vaccine and find information about how to upload your vaccine documentation on the COVID-19 website [here](#).

Capacity

University facilities, including classrooms, teaching and research laboratories, libraries, common spaces, and administrative spaces, will operate at full capacity. Residence halls, dining halls, and campus retail outlets will also operate at normal capacity.

Classes

Classes will be taught in person. We will observe fall break and Thanksgiving break. The full academic calendar can be found [here](#).

We heard from students and faculty that technology-enhanced “dual-mode” teaching was especially challenging. For Fall 2021, we are not asking instructors to offer their courses in dual-mode. Indeed, the pandemic reaffirmed the importance of in-person teaching and learning. As such, there will not be an option for students or instructors to regularly attend a class remotely. The technology does remain available in most Registrar classrooms. Faculty may of course use dual delivery or lecture recording technology at their discretion and as needed. Rooms will be available for instructor drop-in visits between August 18-20. Students should follow pre-pandemic practices for [missed classes due to illness or other excused absences](#).

Instructors and students may interact freely for group work, labs, instructional activities, and the like. Instructors may arrange furniture at their discretion to facilitate learning. Fall courses have been assigned to classrooms according to pre-pandemic standards; we will not use COVID-capacities or temporary classrooms. Students will no longer be asked to use marked seats or report their seat locations.

Masks

Masks are not required outdoors.

For **fully vaccinated** Notre Dame faculty, staff, and students, masking is optional indoors on campus, including in residence halls. There are some exceptions to this, primarily involving spaces and times where visitors are commonly present. Due to our inability to verify the vaccination status of those outside our highly vaccinated campus community and our inability to easily differentiate between those who are immediate members of the Notre Dame community versus visitors, masks will be required (except when eating and drinking) of both vaccinated and unvaccinated faculty, staff, and students in some campus spaces during times when those spaces are generally open to the public. See more detailed guidance below our signatures and on Notre Dame’s COVID response [website](#).

Those **students** who are **not fully vaccinated must wear masks inside campus buildings**, except when alone in a private office, in a personal residence hall room, or when eating or drinking.

Those **faculty and staff** who are **not fully vaccinated or who have not uploaded proof of vaccination must wear masks inside campus buildings**, except when alone in a private office or when eating or drinking.

All visitors to campus, regardless of vaccination status, are expected to wear masks inside campus buildings (except when eating and drinking), again in an effort to help us protect our community.

Every member of the Notre Dame community is expected to carry a mask at all times.

Faculty may require students to wear masks in their classes, studios, or laboratories. We expect students to be respectful of these arrangements.

Anyone who would prefer to wear a mask in any setting is welcome to do so. We should be kind and respectful of everyone in our community and of their choices at all times.

If you show any cold or flu-like symptoms

For the safety and well-being of our campus, all members of this community – whether vaccinated or not – who experience a high fever, difficulty breathing, loss of taste or smell, or a cough (potential COVID symptoms) or feel ill more generally (e.g., persistent headache, body aches, sore throat, or fatigue) should wear masks, observe physical distancing, limit interactions, AND promptly seek a diagnostic COVID test. Diagnostic testing will be readily available at the Joyce Center testing site, beginning Monday, August 16. Learn more about on-campus diagnostic testing [here](#).

Surveillance testing

Those students, faculty, and staff who are unvaccinated or have not yet provided proof of vaccination must report for weekly surveillance testing throughout the fall semester. Unvaccinated students will also be required to participate in entry testing as they return to campus.

Student Activities

In-person student activities will take place without most of the COVID restrictions that were in effect last year. More details can be found in the “Masking, Gatherings, and Visitors” section below our signature lines.

Conferences and events

Conferences and events that include visitors will be permitted. Again, visitors are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated, and regardless of vaccination status, must wear masks inside campus buildings and at any other time designated by the University.

Students, you will soon receive additional information from Vice President for Student Affairs Fr. Gerry Olinger, C.S.C., and for our faculty and staff colleagues, Provost Marie Lynn Miranda and Executive Vice President Shannon Cullinan will recommence a regular cadence of communication.

We ask for your continued flexibility, patience, and understanding should we need to adapt our approach in the days and weeks ahead given changing circumstances. We are deeply grateful for and inspired by the ways this community has responded to the challenges of the pandemic thus far. This is a time to show strength and to give grace.

Yours in Notre Dame,

Marie Lynn Miranda, Charles and Jill Fischer Provost
Shannon Cullinan, Executive Vice President
Rev. Gerry Olinger, C.S.C., Vice President for Student Affairs

In the more detailed information that follows, we describe the **COVID-19 Resources** the University has in place as part of our ongoing response to the pandemic, as well as the University's current **Policies on Masking, Visitors, and Gatherings**.

I. **COVID-19 RESOURCES**

- As those of you who were on campus last semester know, the University has an **on-campus COVID-19 testing center** in the Edmund P. Joyce Athletic & Convocation Center (Joyce Center or JACC). The testing center handles diagnostic testing for those vaccinated or unvaccinated individuals who experience any COVID-like symptoms, as well as entry testing and weekly surveillance testing for all members of our campus community who are unvaccinated. The testing center will also perform targeted surveillance testing of vaccinated individuals as conditions warrant, but fully vaccinated individuals will not be subject to weekly surveillance testing. At the same time, it continues to be a University expectation that any member of this community who is asked to present for testing, whether diagnostic or surveillance, will do so.
- In addition to the on-campus COVID-19 testing center, **the COVID-19 Response Unit (or CRU) continues to serve as the coordinating hub** for all of our COVID-related resources, including testing, contact tracing, and quarantine and isolation. CRU also serves an important role in providing information and connecting you to campus resources. You can learn more by visiting the University's [COVID website](#), or by calling the CRU hotline at: 574-634-4373.
- The University has a well-trained **Contact Tracing Team** that works with students, faculty, or staff who test positive for COVID-19. Students, faculty, or staff who test positive for COVID – whether vaccinated or unvaccinated – will be required to isolate. For on-campus students, the University has once again secured **off-campus locations for quarantine and isolation**; as was true last year, off-campus students and employees will quarantine or isolate in their own homes when necessary. Unvaccinated individuals who are identified as close contacts of a person who tests positive (as identified in the contact tracing process) will be required to quarantine. In accordance with current medical guidelines, vaccinated individuals who are close contacts of a person who tests positive do not need to quarantine but will be required to wear a mask indoors and take a COVID test on day 4 after exposure.

II. **POLICIES ON MASKING, VISITORS, AND GATHERINGS, EFFECTIVE AUGUST 11**

Masking

- For fully vaccinated Notre Dame faculty, staff, and students, masking is optional indoors on campus, except in the limited circumstances described below. Of course, fully vaccinated members of the campus community who feel more comfortable wearing a mask are strongly encouraged to do so. Every member of the Notre Dame community is expected to carry a mask at all times.
- Those **students** who are **not fully vaccinated must wear masks inside campus buildings**, except when alone in a private office, in a personal residence hall room, or when eating or drinking.

- Those **faculty and staff** who are **not fully vaccinated or who have not uploaded proof of vaccination must wear masks inside campus buildings**, except when alone in a private office or when eating or drinking.
- Due to the spread of highly contagious variants of the COVID-19 virus, and our inability to verify the vaccination status of those outside our highly vaccinated campus community, **masks will be required (except when eating and drinking) of both vaccinated and unvaccinated faculty, staff, and students in some campus spaces during times when those spaces are generally open to the public.** More information will be provided on covid.nd.edu, and signage will clearly indicate when and where masking is required in University spaces. A few examples include public areas of the Morris Inn and Eck Visitor Center. A list of these spaces will be updated regularly [here](#).
- Additional rules and guidance regarding masking for the fully vaccinated may apply in classroom, laboratory, studio, and other settings, at the discretion of the individual instructor or lab director.
- For the safety and well-being of our campus, all members of this community – whether vaccinated or not – who experience a high fever, difficulty breathing, loss of taste or smell, or a cough (potential COVID symptoms) or feel ill more generally (e.g., persistent headache, body aches, sore throat, or fatigue) should wear masks, observe physical distancing, limit interactions, AND promptly seek a diagnostic COVID test. Diagnostic testing will be readily available at the Joyce Center testing site, beginning Monday, August 16. Learn more about on-campus diagnostic testing [here](#).
- **All visitors to campus, regardless of vaccination status, are expected to wear masks inside campus buildings** (except when eating and drinking), again in an effort to help us protect our community. This will apply to families who are on campus for move-in August 20 – August 22.
- The reasons why someone is masked can vary widely. It is vitally important that we demonstrate at all times respect for each person’s situation, and treat each other with compassion and kindness.
- Given that vaccination rates in St. Joseph County are considerably lower than the 90%+ rate on campus, we urge everyone to mask when shopping, dining, or otherwise interacting in the local community, for your own protection and that of our neighbors in the greater Michiana area.

Visitors

- Visitors are welcome on campus, subject to any public health protocols in effect at the time of their visit.
- As noted above, visitors must wear masks inside all University buildings, except when eating or drinking.
- University academic and buildings will once again be accessible to visitors, subject to restrictions specific to particular buildings.

- At this time, with the exception of move-in from Friday, August 20 through Sunday, August 22, visitors who are not Notre Dame students, faculty, or staff are not permitted inside residence halls or student rooms.

Gatherings

- In general, the COVID-related restrictions on gatherings and events in place last year – including meetings, conferences, and performances – are lifted. This means that event venues can once again be utilized, with gathering size to be determined by venue and nature of the event and subject to public health protocols in effect at the time of the event.
- Visitors to campus are expected to mask when attending indoor gatherings on campus, except when eating or drinking. Organizers of events should convey this expectation to attendees.
- The Vice President of University Enterprises and Events is authorized to impose any restrictions on gatherings, including reducing the number of permitted attendees, that might be deemed necessary to protect the health of the campus community or guests.