



COVID-19 Update: July 30, 2021

1 message

UCA President's Office <presidentsoffice@uca.edu>
Reply-To: noreply@uca.edu
To: FS <fs@uca.edu>

Fri, Jul 30, 2021 at 10:17 AM

Dear Faculty and Staff:

As we approach the beginning of the fall semester, we recognize the mixture of hope, optimism, concern, and uncertainty. I want to assure you that we continue to monitor the very fluid COVID-19 situation and adjust our plans as necessary. We are committed to answering your questions, addressing concerns, and communicating regularly with campus as we have done over the past year and a half.

That commitment is for the long haul in a pandemic that will be in play for multiple years. With approximately [14.4%](#) of the world's population fully vaccinated, we know that this virus will likely continue to be a part of our lives for at least a couple of more years and that variants—like the highly transmissible Delta variant—will continue to evolve. The tools we have now to manage the pandemic are far greater than a year ago, including a vaccine highly effective at preventing serious illness and hospitalization. The Student Health Clinic will continue to offer the Pfizer vaccine to the campus community free of charge. I am pleased to report that the recently announced vaccination incentive for all full- and part-time employees has already resulted in 961 submissions of proof of vaccination (of a universe of 1,550 possible submissions), and we anticipate this number to increase as the fall semester nears.

Health care organizations have begun reporting that the number of vaccinated individuals with breakthrough cases of COVID-19 has increased. And while we know that vaccinated individuals can contract COVID-19, health care providers tell us that the symptoms are generally mild such as headache, fatigue, or sore throat. This is a much better outcome than unvaccinated individuals, who are more likely to experience critical illness, hospitalization, and death.

Our campus will continue to encourage vaccination, particularly among students, and we are creating targeted communications that will be rolled out throughout the next six weeks. The Student Health Clinic also plans to host pop up vaccination clinics and information tabling throughout the semester.

As a publicly-funded entity, we cannot mandate masking for our campus. However, recent guidance from the [CDC](#) encourages wearing a mask in areas where there is a [high transmission](#) rate of the virus, such as what we are seeing in Arkansas and Faulkner County. The CDC states the following:

- To maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of [substantial or high transmission](#).
- Wearing a mask is most important if you have a weakened immune system or if, because of your age or an underlying medical condition, you are at increased risk for severe disease, or if someone in your household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is unvaccinated. If this applies to you or your household, you might choose to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission in your area.

In accordance with these new CDC guidelines, UCA encourages the use of face coverings indoors for everyone - regardless of vaccination status - during this period of substantial transmission. While wearing face coverings on campus is not required, we encourage the UCA community to follow the CDC recommendations during this period of widespread distribution of the Delta

variant across our region. Cloth and disposable masks, as well as other personal protective equipment, can be obtained by using the [request form](#).

Through the Pandemic Planning Team and the local Testing and Tracing Consortium, we will continue to monitor health care capacity and other elements related to managing our operations and services during the pandemic. If the situation dictates, we may pivot to remote operations for small windows of time, but no plans exist to move to a permanent remote status. This means that the entire campus community needs to prepare for periods of remote work due to a pause in campus face-to-face operations (similar to what we experienced during the inclement weather in February 2021), or for situations where individuals are placed in isolation or quarantine. Department supervisors are encouraged to be flexible with employees. In the absence of federally-mandated leave options, employees required to be in quarantine or isolation may use vacation or sick leave if and when they are not able to work remotely.

Additionally, I want to remind you that any COVID-19 health-related questions or concerns can be emailed to the Student Health Clinic's email covid19@uca.edu. This email is also being monitored over the weekend to ensure that faculty, staff, and students have access to medical guidance for any COVID-19 related issues even outside of normal business hours.

Thank you for your continued support for the health, safety, and well-being of our campus. By working together and using the proven safety mitigation efforts that we have deployed in the past, I am confident that we can successfully navigate this academic semester.

Sincerely,

Houston Davis
President