



COVID-19 Update: Preparations for Fall Semester

1 message

UCA President's Office <presidentsoffice@uca.edu>

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As we work through the remainder of summer and prepare for the fall semester, I wanted to provide you with an update regarding our pandemic planning process and remind you of the public policy context around that work. As a publicly funded entity, UCA is subject to recent changes in state law and regulations impacting our response to the pandemic. As you all know, acts were passed this legislative session that eliminate mask mandates by public bodies effective July 28, 2021. The acts also require that public entities in Arkansas are prohibited from implementing any form of COVID-19 vaccine requirement, so there will be no verification system or required documentation of vaccination to participate in university activities, including employment or enrollment.

The Pandemic Planning Team continues to identify challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and implement all facets of the UCA Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan. While a subgroup has continued through late June and early July, yesterday was the first full meeting of that committee after a break of five weeks. As dozens of faculty and staff are active with the academic planning and physical preparations for a return to 100% occupancy of classroom and common spaces for fall 2021, the Pandemic Planning Team has five main areas of emphasis and key deliverables as we move into August and September.

1. **Prioritize vaccine distribution and participation for UCA students and employees.** This includes the continued development of vaccine education and communication materials, especially those geared toward returning and new students.
2. **Continue to stress all health and hygiene best practices, including messaging that unvaccinated individuals should continue to wear face coverings.** Signage throughout campus will be updated to reflect current operations, state regulations, and general health guidance. Additionally, the university is maintaining an inventory of personal protective equipment (PPE) for students, faculty, and staff desiring or requiring such through the coming academic year. Many individuals are continuing to wear masks (regardless of vaccination status), and we want to make sure that plenty are available to those that need them.
3. **Continue a robust testing and tracing protocol including the continuance of the Testing & Tracing Consortium with Conway Regional Health System, Hendrix, and CBC.** While a subgroup has continued to monitor and maintain statistics through June and July, the full consortium membership will begin meeting again the first week of August.
4. **Assess and prepare to manage appropriate levels of quarantine and isolation housing.** An inventory of 65 units has been continued throughout the summer with a high point of three units being used to date. Student Health, Housing & Residence Life, and Aramark Food Service are coordinating to determine the appropriate number of active units for August through October.
5. **Assure that all academic courses and support functions have a contingency plan in case of change to operation (for a variety of reasons including pandemic, weather, disaster, etc.).** The academic planning subgroup will continue to monitor instructional methods and support measures to ensure inclusive pedagogy and student success for all students, including but not limited to those students, faculty, and academic professional staff who may have to be in quarantine or isolation.

As a reminder, all full- and part-time UCA employees, family of employees, and all students may receive the COVID-19 vaccine through our UCA Student Health Clinic. The vaccines are free of charge and can be used for either the first or second Pfizer dose. Please call the Student Health Clinic at 501-450-3136 to schedule an appointment or receive additional information about the vaccine.

Thank you for your time and attention as we continue to navigate this stage of the pandemic.

Sincerely,

Houston Davis
President