MEMORANDUM

TO: ECU Faculty and Staff
FROM: Philip Rogers, Chancellor
DATE: May 5, 2021
SUBJ: Planning for Employee Return to Campus

Pirates,

This week is State Employee Recognition Week, and the people are what make this place so special. Thank you for your contributions to our university, especially during the past year. You have met every challenge that presented itself to advance ECU’s mission and to keep our community safe.

Your creativity and resilience yielded new methods of teaching, serving, and conducting business, all while adhering to our rigorous safety protocols. You have led by example. Your hard work has kept our campus open for our students and our region, and I am grateful for all your efforts.

We now turn our attention to planning for the fall 2021 semester.

The latest CDC guidance allows fully vaccinated people to return to larger and denser gatherings with a mask. And Gov. Roy Cooper recently announced that with stable infection rate trends and continued vaccination success that the state expects to lift mandatory social distancing, capacity and mass gathering restrictions by June 1.

All of this is very good news and a source of confident optimism as we continue to move toward a full return to campus operations for fall. In fact, campus is already more active. As of May 1, only about one-third of staff (excluding faculty) are teleworking. In the fall, we will see additional density with the return of students and faculty to the classroom. Currently, we have about 75% of undergraduate course offerings scheduled for face-to-face for the fall semester.

In order to return to “normal,” we need to accelerate our return to campus. In short, we will maintain the campus COVID-19 Community Standards throughout the fall semester although those standards will likely be modified based on guidance from our health care experts, including CDC and NCDHHS. Masks may remain a requirement on campus and testing/tracing will certainly continue. We will reevaluate our physical distancing and other pandemic-associated requirements as more definitive information and guidance emerges from the CDC, NCDHHS, and UNC System.

Important Dates and Next Steps

- To prepare for a more traditional campus experience in the fall, we are announcing all campus departments that do not currently have a fully open and operational on-campus presence should be prepared to be fully open and operational with adequate in-person on-campus staffing beginning Monday, July 12, 2021 and no later than Monday, July 26, 2021. Many units will need to be fully operational on campus prior to then, and departments should continue to designate those employees as Required On-Site Employees (ROSE).
- All units must have a return plan designed and approved by the appropriate vice chancellor no later than Monday, May 24, 2021 in order to communicate their plans to employees no later than June 14, 2021.
For the fall semester, faculty teaching on campus should be back on site no later than Convocation day, **Friday, Aug. 20, 2021**.

We realize that some of you will have questions about what a full-scale return looks like for faculty and staff. ECU Human Resources is working with the UNC System to finalize those details.

Flexible work options, such as hybrid schedules that include a combination of on-site and remote work, may be available depending upon the nature of the position and work performed, at the discretion of departmental leadership and as long as the university’s operational needs can be met during the transitional period of July 12 to Aug. 20. Supervisors are encouraged to continue to exercise flexibility where they can during the coming weeks as we approach the fall semester, as we recognize employees may need time to make preparations or arrangements in their personal lives to return to on-site work.

We have recently received the UNC System Office Flexible Work Arrangements Regulation and are in the process of developing an interim Flexible Work Arrangements Regulation here at ECU. This regulation will outline the continuing availability of flexible work arrangement options, such as remote and flexible work schedules, that departments can consider as they plan what their operations will look like for Fall 2021 and beyond.

**Our hope is that by providing these target dates now, departments can begin to plan, employees currently working remotely have sufficient time to prepare, and those needing Americans with Disability Act accommodations or other workplace supports have ample time to work with their supervisors and managers. Requests for workplace accommodation from any employee should be directed to the university’s ADA coordinator for analysis. Confidential health information should not be addressed or handled directly by individual supervisors or departmental personnel.**

**Vaccine information:**

- **Important reminders:** COVID-19 vaccines are currently available in the state to everyone ages 16 and older. Please visit the [ECU COVID-19 Vaccine website](#) for important information about the vaccine and available time off to receive the shot.
- **Vaccination and return to work:** While we encourage every member of Pirate Nation to be vaccinated, we respect an individual’s right to choose not to do so. However, not receiving the vaccination will not exempt employees from the expectation of returning to on-site work.
- **Letting us know if you received the vaccine:** In the coming weeks, ECU will launch a voluntary reporting form to help assess the rate of vaccination on campus. Your answers will be kept confidential but will aid in preparations for campus in the fall.

We will keep the [Return to Pirate Nation website](#) updated as we finalize return-to-campus plans. Our Fall Semester Planning Committee is meeting regularly, and we expect a draft of the fall plan for the entire campus community no later than June 7. Be on the lookout for opportunities to respond to the draft plan through a survey and forum.

As we make our way toward the light at the end of this year-long tunnel, I implore you to remain vigilant in precautionary measures over the coming weeks, especially as the vaccine continues to be rolled out. It is important to continue wearing our face coverings and maintaining physical distancing to ensure a successful summer and fall.

I also encourage you to take care of yourself during this time of transition back to campus life, including accessing the [Faculty and Staff Assistance Program](#) if you need it. You are our most important resource, and we need you.

Thank you for all you have done to protect Pirate Nation. It is my honor to serve alongside you, and I look forward to being with you on campus.

Philip G. Rogers
Chancellor