MEMORANDUM

TO: ECU Community
FROM: Philip Rogers, Chancellor
DATE: August 31, 2021
SUBJ: Campus Update – COVID-19 Mitigations

One of the highlights from my first months as chancellor occurred last week as I watched our campus come to life with students, faculty and staff activity for the start of the Fall 2021 semester. To groups on and off campus, I often speak of the special place this university is and our collective resilience and mission that makes us ONE ECU.

Now more than ever our community must pull together as we live with COVID-19 and the Delta variant. We see how excited students are to be back on campus; how happy faculty are to be teaching in classrooms instead of only via screens; and how excited Pirate Nation is for athletic competitions to be open to fans, not just the players. It will take all of us working together, wearing masks in the classrooms and during other indoor activities, and getting vaccinated or tested regularly to combat the continuing challenges of COVID-19.

COVID-19 Vaccination Rates
This week, the COVID-19 dashboard has been updated to include the rate of vaccination for students and employees. This is another reminder that we're in this fight against COVID together. Thank you to the students who have uploaded their vaccination cards to their myPIRATEchart and the employees who completed the attestation survey. As of Monday, Aug. 30, 46% of students who attend classes on campus and 59% of students who live in residence halls are vaccinated, and 76% of employees attest to being vaccinated.

A reminder that COVID-19 vaccines are readily available to students and employees and are key to protecting our campus and the Pirate community. Vaccinations are available on campus through ECU’s Student Health Services or ECU Family Practice Pharmacy.

The COVID-19 operational matrix is one tool that ECU administration uses to evaluate campus response to the changing variables that COVID-19 continues to present, such as the Delta variant. As another demonstration of the collective campus responsibility and commitment in this fight against COVID, the COVID-19 Fall Planning Committee elected to make the operational matrix part of the Return of Pirate Nation website. It's important to remember this is a tool used by our public health and medical experts as they make recommendations for any proposed modifications to campus operations. The matrix is not a prescriptive tool, but instead a set of potential actions to consider as we manage our way through any increase in cases. The suggested protocols are selected strategically based on the data observed and the best information available from our experts and the scientific community to combat the spread of infection.
Due to the increase of positive cases over the last week and the high transmissibility of the Delta variant, we are operating under an elevated risk. However, we continue to have vaccines available, testing capacity, quarantine and isolation space, and other mitigations to assist as we continue campus operations. If the risk level changes, we will communicate the change to campus along with any corresponding operational adjustments.

With valuable input from faculty leadership, the administration has elected to implement the following:

- We already require masks in indoor settings as described on Aug. 3, 2021 in a message to campus. This provision was based on the more contagious nature of the Delta variant and began Aug. 4 before students returned to campus for fall semester. Even though no epidemiological evidence points to in-person class delivery transmission, one operational change from the Aug. 4 announcement is all faculty, regardless of vaccination status, are now asked to wear a mask while teaching excluding for the exception provided in the University Regulation on Face Coverings.
- Surveillance testing will increase, beginning Sept. 1. See below for details.
- We have increased the number of contact tracers.
- We are increasing signage and communication reminding everyone of our Community Expectations.
- Finally, our dining halls are ramping up grab-and-go service options.

**Surveillance Testing**

- Beginning Wednesday, Sept. 1 through at least Sept. 10, surveillance testing of students is shifting from saliva testing to PCR testing. This adjustment includes additional investments to increase testing resources and capacity.
- Unvaccinated students living in residence halls will be tested weekly for the next few weeks.
- Unvaccinated off-campus students will continue to be tested regularly with the goal of up to 50% each week.
- Surveillance testing of employees who attested to not being vaccinated will begin Tuesday, Sept. 7. (Sept. 6 is the Labor Day state holiday).

In consultation with the UNC System and public health officials, we continue to leverage a variety of mitigation strategies to manage our way through this pandemic, but none are more effective than mask compliance and vaccines. Please actively embrace our university’s motto of Servire, “To Serve,” by wearing your mask and getting the vaccine. And I hope you will encourage your friends and colleagues to do the same.
University leadership will continue to monitor data and take necessary steps to minimize the risk of transmission and help control the spread of COVID-19 as local conditions change. I count on each member of the ECU community to do their part because together we are stronger. We are ONE ECU.

See below for a special message from Dr. LaNika Wright and me.