

Date: July 13, 2021

From: Chuck Taber, Provost and Executive Vice President

RE: Additional Guidance for Move to Phase Out

Dear Colleagues,

The fall 2021 semester is quickly approaching. More than any in the past, this semester offers unique challenges and great possibility. I am writing to provide information to help in your preparations and to provide information and resources to support your success.

We have announced our plan for a return to an on-campus, in-person experience for our students, faculty and staff on our campuses. We now have the opportunity to renew traditions that were paused during the pandemic and the chance to explore new ways to teach, learn, research, and work together. As we do so, we must remember our commitments to protect our community by supporting health and safety, and to create a welcoming, inclusive environment that supports faculty, staff, and student success.

To that end, the following is a summary of current guidance and resources.

Phase out

[Phase out](#) begins Aug. 1, which means we will revert to many of our pre-pandemic operations while continuing a few remaining health and safety protocols. As guidance is updated, announcements will be shared in K-State Today. For the most up-to-date guidance, please refer to the university's [COVID-19 website](#).

COVID protocols

The university will continue to adjust COVID protocols based on public health guidance and advice from experts. Changes to university policy are consistent with updated guidance from Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and supported by ready access to the vaccine, and endorsement by state and local officials.

University leadership is monitoring the current rate of cases, hospitalizations and deaths. We are aware of the renewed concern about the Delta variant and are prepared to adjust our plans as needed.

A main tenet of our guidance is to promote our collective responsibility to help protect our communities by self-monitoring symptoms, staying home if we are unwell, washing our hands, exercising the option to wear face coverings, and getting vaccinated as individuals are able.

Enhanced cleaning protocols remain and common areas and classrooms and other learning spaces will be cleaned on a regular basis by facilities. The requirement to clean classrooms, labs and other

learning spaces by faculty between occupancy changes is lifted. However, supplies are available in these learning spaces to be used as needed. If you have new faculty who would like training on using the cleaning equipment in classrooms, please contact Linda Craghead, director of facility services, at lindacraghead@k-state.edu or 785-532-1789.

Face coverings and physical distancing are optional for all individuals on our campuses and at university events. Individuals who are not vaccinated are strongly encouraged to continue wearing face coverings. Masking and physical distancing requirements remain in effect for the following settings: Lafene Health Center and other patient-facing settings, the K-State Center for Child Development, and university shuttles.

Vaccines

Unvaccinated faculty, staff and students who can receive the [COVID-19 vaccine](#) are strongly encouraged to do so. [Lafene Health Center](#) offers COVID-19 vaccine opportunities by appointment, Monday through Friday. Schedule your appointment through the [myLafene+ patient portal](#) or by calling Lafene Health Center at 785-532-6544. The CDC also offers an online tool to find a [COVID-19 vaccine](#) near you.

K-State faculty, staff and students are encouraged to voluntarily upload their COVID-19 vaccine cards to the [myLafene+ patient portal](#). HealthQuest credits are also available for employees who [report COVID-19 immunizations](#).

Vaccinated persons avoid interruption to their work and academic experience by being exempt from the requirement to quarantine as long as they meet specific criteria. [Isolation and quarantine guidance](#) remain in effect for unvaccinated individuals who may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, or who are traveling or returning to Kansas from a high-risk area.

The university is also participating in the [COVID-19 College Vaccine Challenge](#) as a special project of The White House and the U.S. Department of Education.

Lafene Health Center is collecting and assessing available vaccine data acquired through local, state and national vaccination programs. Current estimates show a 72% vaccination rate for K-State faculty, staff, and students whose vaccines were reported through the State of Kansas. A separate effort is underway to survey new students regarding their rate of vaccination. The data will be used to inform educational programming and future guidance decisions.

Return of employees

An important part of offering an in-person semester is the successful return of our employees. Beginning Aug. 1, we are removing all requirements to de-densify our spaces. This means our employees will return to our campuses and we can prepare to fully support the in-person student experience we will offer this fall.

Each academic dean and vice/associate provost will work within their units to make plans and to communicate those plans and expectations to all employees. Unit leaders can determine the best way to bring faculty and staff back through a phased return between Aug. 1 and Aug. 30.

As a reminder, our students are returning to campus in mid-August with residence hall move-in, early arrivals for international students, and other on-boarding programs. Many of our units have considerable responsibility for student-facing support and may require employees back in the office in early August to prepare for our students. Consideration should also be given to health and safety and high-risk employees who cannot return to in-person work. Human Capital Services is available to provide support for supervisors and employees with questions.

Remote work policy

On July 6, Human Capital Services [announced](#) a revised remote work policy and [remote work website](#). The website provides a link to the new policy, decision-making guide, resources and guidance for employees and supervisors, FAQs, and required forms.

I want to emphasize that decisions related to remote work must follow university policy and procedure and should be driven by aligning the function of the role and the necessity of in-person work to the standards of service we expect for an in-person semester. Unit leaders, supervisors and employees should engage in a comprehensive assessment of what work arrangement supports the mission of the university, the department, and the function of the employee's designated role.

Supervisor guidance

Those with responsibility for supervising will have an extraordinary next few months as they lead the return to our campuses. I acknowledge the work that was required to pivot to remote work, those who managed a hybrid workforce to maintain operations, and the work ahead to transition back to in-person. We want to make sure that you have the support you need to be successful. Human Capital Services is working to update supervisor guidance and training to support phase out. The Teaching and Learning Center is working on a toolbox for faculty to facilitate a mindful return to in-person instruction and other duties. Additional information will be available in the coming weeks.

The next several weeks will be exhilarating and challenging. Our efforts to successfully return to an in-person semester means that we will need to reintegrate, reenergize, and reconnect our teams. It will not be easy and it will require our best leadership as we attend to the energy and anxiety our colleagues and students will present. We thank you for leading with optimism and compassion to support faculty, staff, and student success.

Together we will keep [#kstatestrong!](#)

Chuck