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**Academic Continuity and the
Health and Safety of Students, Faculty, and Staff Policy for
Winter and Spring Terms 2021
*Released November 2020***

The State of New York and the entire nation continue to face unprecedented health challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, SUNY continues to operate under a state public health emergency. To maintain the highest level of public health and safety, the following will be the health and safety protocols for all SUNY campuses. Of course, if federal, state, or local health guidance changes, the SUNY guidance will be updated to conform accordingly.

For the purpose of the policy, Campus shall mean the 29 State-operated campuses and 30 community colleges operating under the program of the State University of New York. The individual Campus plans should be done in collaboration with the Campus community.

1. COVID-19 Testing and Monitoring

Below are the minimum requirements for testing and monitoring procedures during the transition from fall 2020 to winter and spring 2021 instruction.¹

A. Departing Campus in Fall

Please refer to the Chancellor's October 26, 2020 [*SUNY Mandatory Testing for Fall 2020 Semester Closing Guidance*](#).

B. Students Remaining on Campus

The Campus will implement a process to allow students to request permission to remain on campus after the fall semester ends and/or during the winter term. The Campus must also develop a plan for those students who are pre-approved to so remain. This plan must include regular COVID-19 testing and any necessary isolation and quarantine protocols, including confirmation that students have access to meals and/or meal preparation facilities. Campuses must also ensure services are available with a special focus on monitoring the student's mental and physical well-being while residing on campus. Furthermore, these students must sign an acknowledgement of the rules that will govern their stay, whether it is an addendum to the housing license or another stand-alone document.

¹ NYS Department of Health Guidance, local County Health Department procedures, approved campus surveillance plans, and the "Campus Restarting: Recommendations for COVID-19 Screening, Testing and Surveillance" white paper should be referred to for details.

- C. Returning to Campus for Winter and Spring Terms Testing and Isolation Requirements
Students returning to campus or attending courses on campus for the winter and spring 2021 semester must be tested for COVID-19. Campuses shall develop plans to phase in the safe return of students to accommodate the testing and other health and safety requirements. It is strongly recommended that faculty and staff working on campus are pre-tested before returning to campus.

Specific requirements are as follows:

- i. All students, faculty, and staff must be pre-screened daily for travel history, COVID-19 history and COVID-19 symptoms for two (2) weeks prior to return.
- ii. Upon returning for winter and/or spring 2021 on-campus activities, any student who will (1) live on campus, or (2) take at least one class on campus, or (3) utilize services on campus (e.g. library, gym, dining), or (4) work on campus, must:
 - a) Submit an attestation that he/she/they have completed a seven (7) day precautionary quarantine prior to returning to campus; and either
 - i. Present evidence of a negative COVID-19 test taken within three (3) days prior to return or participate in on-campus COVID-19 testing as soon as possible but no later than five (5) days of returning to campus², or
 - ii. Present documentation of a positive diagnostic result for COVID-19 from the prior 3-month period.
 - b) Inform the campus of any known contacts with COVID-19 positive individuals, or of any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or of a positive test result for COVID-19 (this notification to campus should not replace reporting to a health care provider or local health department).
- iii. Campuses must resume surveillance testing as soon as students return to campus, pursuant to the individual campus testing plans incorporated into the campus reopening plans and SUNY's Mandatory COVID-19 Testing Program as announced on September 4, 2020. All students, faculty and staff who live on campus and/or plan to be on campus regularly (including instruction, co-curricular activities, and meetings) shall be tested regularly.
- iv. In cases of possible exposure to COVID-19 on campus, Campuses shall follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance [Testing, Screening, and](#)

² The 3-day timeframe is consistent with health guidance set forth by New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) for pre-testing requirements for those traveling from [out of state into New York](#). The 5-day timeframe is consistent with NYSDOH guidance for individuals undergoing [non-essential elective surgery](#).



[Outbreak Response for Institutions of Higher Education \(IHEs\)](#), specifically the section “Tiered approach and inclusion criteria for SARS-CoV-2 testing of persons with possible exposure in IHE setting in the context of an outbreak”.

- v. Students, faculty, and staff who have traveled to/from restricted states/regions or to/from international locations as defined by New York State must follow the [New York State Travel Advisory](#) - whether living on- or off-campus—and attest that they have submitted the [New York Traveler Health form](#) and will follow the guidance of the governing local health department related to mandatory testing, quarantine/isolation, and timing of returning to campus.
- vi. Any student, faculty, or staff testing positive for COVID-19 must isolate and follow the New York State Department of Health Order on isolation and the guidance of the governing local health department on length of said isolation and timing of return to campus.
- vii. Campuses must confirm there is appropriate quarantine and isolation space for on-campus residential students in accordance with the individual campus reopening plans. Campuses are encouraged to work with the governing local health department to assist with quarantine and isolation space for off-campus students if necessary.

2. **Mode of Instruction**

A. Winter 2020-21 term

Instruction for the winter term must be fully remote, with the exception of courses such as those with clinical practicums, research, and applied learning experiences that require physical presence—this applies to both undergraduate and graduate study. On-campus density must be minimized to the maximum extent practicable and consistent with New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) guidelines. For all on-campus students, faculty, and staff, the campus shall maintain surveillance testing at the percentage level stated in the campus reopening plan. Campuses should notify SUNY System Administration of any courses which fall into the above categories of requiring in-person instruction to provost@suny.edu. For courses that do not fall within the above categories, campuses may request specific exceptions to SUNY System Administration to hold any other in-person instruction.

B. Spring 2021 term

Spring term Instruction must be remote prior to February 1 in order to minimize additional risks associated with influenza season.

- i. If necessary, campuses may allow students to return to campus prior to February 1 in order to meet the mandatory testing requirement outlined above. Spring term start dates prior to February 1 must occur in a fully remote format except for those clinical practicums, research, and applied learning experiences that require physical presence as outlined above. Such acceptable in-person



instruction includes licensed professional practicums, teaching practicums, laboratory research, and other types of hands-on applied/experiential learning that takes place in specialized facilities and/or requires specialized equipment.

- ii. Campuses should notify SUNY System Administration of any courses which fall into the above categories. For courses that do not fall within the above categories, campuses may request specific exceptions to SUNY System Administration to begin in-person instruction prior to February 1. Both notification and/or requests for exceptions must be submitted no later than **December 1, 2020** to provost@suny.edu.
- iii. Modes of instruction must ensure safe on-campus density, consistent with New York State and the governing local health department guidelines. Campuses must be prepared to execute fully remote plans if the campus meets the threshold for a mandatory pause on in-person instruction as outlined in the [Supplemental Higher Education guidance](#) from the New York State Department of Health.
- iv. Campus expectations for students during such a mandatory pause must be clearly communicated to students prior to the beginning of the semester.

C. Remote Instruction

Working together with campus governance processes and in collaboration with its faculty and support staff, campuses must work to ensure that remote instruction meets or exceeds expectations of regular and substantive interaction. Campuses will continue to assist students with access to devices and internet connectivity in order for students to be successful with remote instruction.

- i. **Transparency:** Before the beginning of each semester, campuses must publish [on their website] the percentage of courses which will be offered in-person and remote.
- ii. **Regular Interaction:** The institution must provide for the opportunity for substantive interactions with the student on a predictable and regular basis commensurate with both the length of time, and the amount of content, in the course or competency, must monitor the student's academic engagement and success, and must make clear that the instructor(s) are responsible for promptly and proactively engaging in substantive interaction with the student when needed on the basis of such monitoring, or upon request by the student.
- iii. **International Students:** The institution will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the needs of international students completing coursework from other time zones, e.g. – opportunities for asynchronous instruction, interactions scheduled in a way that takes into account the time zones of the students enrolled in the section, and other such flexibilities.



- iv. Substantive Interaction: The institution must engage students in teaching, learning, and assessment, consistent with the content under discussion, while also including at least two of the following:
 - a) Provision of direct instruction;
 - b) Assessment and / or the provision of feedback on a student's coursework;
 - c) Provision of information and / or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency;
 - d) Facilitation of group discussion regarding the content of a course or competency; or
 - e) Other instructional activities approved by the institution's/program's accrediting agency.
- v. Campuses must work with faculty in order to equip them with the knowledge and skill to support remote learning of students with disabilities. Campuses should remind faculty members that the standard process for requesting academic accommodation would continue to apply, no matter the mode of instruction.
- vi. Campuses must work to ensure all faculty and students have access to orientation/training opportunities to familiarize them with instructional technologies and remote pedagogies, especially those faculty for whom such technologies/pedagogies are new and for those students in vulnerable populations.
- vii. Campuses must provide proactive and regularized advising interventions for all academic programs in such manner that prioritizes student success.
- viii. Campus communities should utilize [instructional support](#) provided by SUNY.
- ix. Additional support and guidance on academic continuity can be found [in our FAQ document](#).

3. **Academic Calendar**

A. Spring Term Start Dates

In-person instruction for spring term shall not occur on campuses prior to February 1. Pursuant to Section 2 above, campuses must notify SUNY System Administration of any courses which require in-person instruction prior to February 1st (e.g. clinical practicums, research, and applied learning experiences). For courses that do not fall within the above categories, campuses may request specific exceptions to SUNY System Administration to begin in-person instruction prior to February 1. Both notification and/or requests for exceptions must be submitted no later than **December 1, 2020** to provost@suny.edu.



B. Spring Break

Given the current risks associated with COVID-19 spread, spring break and any other spring holiday periods will not be permitted. Campuses may build in single-day midweek 'reading days' throughout the semester as an alternative pause of instruction while discouraging/prohibiting travel away from campus. Any on-campus services in support of religious observance shall follow the density, quarantine/isolation, and face covering requirements that are already incorporated into the campus reopening plan. This does not apply to campuses that will offer fully remote learning in Spring 2021. Exceptions to this Spring Break policy will be considered and must be pre-approved by SUNY System Administration by December 1, 2020. Such exceptions must include a process to test students for COVID-19 upon departure from campus as well as testing for COVID-19 upon their return.

C. Commencement

Commencement exercises ordinarily occurring at or near the close of Spring 2021 semester will be considered in accordance with guidance from New York State. Campuses should begin to plan and message virtual commencements and/or safely distanced methods of recognition and degree dissemination for their graduates.

4. On-campus Activities

A. Federal, State and Local Guidance

All in-person activities will continue to follow the mandatory NYSDOH guidance for social distancing as well as the strictures of the approved campus reopening plan.

- i. To the extent possible, activities shall be held outdoors or in a well-ventilated location, and campuses implement CDC recommendations to improve ventilation ([Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education](#)).
- ii. Campuses should continuously assess and confirm that all cleaning protocols are in compliance with NYSDOH Higher Education Guidance and CDC guidance ([Interim Guidance for Higher Education during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#) and [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)).

B. Face Coverings (Masks)

Face coverings (masks) must be worn by all members of the campus community on campus at all times, including in classrooms, conference rooms and other spaces, even when six-foot social distancing exists. Exceptions to mask wearing include when students are (1) in their private residential or personal space, (2) eating meals on-campus while seated and social distancing is appropriately enforced, or (3) by themselves. Faculty and staff are likewise exempt when alone in their office or other space. Any request for a medical, religious, or other accommodation to this policy



should be reviewed on an individual basis in accordance with relevant laws and campus procedures.³

C. Compliance

The Chancellor's [Uniform Sanctioning in Response to COVID-19 Student Violations](#) implementing uniform sanctions System-wide for COVID-19 related violations, remains in effect for the Winter and Spring 2021 terms and must be referenced and incorporated into the campus reopening plan.

D. Mental Health Supports, Services and Referrals

Given the unprecedented times for students, campuses should strive to do the following to increase the support for mental health services among our campus community:

- i. Promote on-campus and community-based mental health treatment and resources, including:
 - a) [ReachOut SUNY](#).
 - b) [Thriving Campus](#).
 - c) [Middle Earth](#) from the University at Albany.
- ii. Highlight therapy groups and other peer-to-peer support strategies
- iii. Advertise the availability of crisis services, including Crisis Text Line, including: NYS OMH Crisis Text Line: Text **GOT5 to 741741**
- iv. Publicize the availability of free online [QPR suicide prevention training](#) for students, faculty, and staff.

5. Reporting

A. Daily Dashboard

Campuses are required to report daily COVID-related information to the SUNY COVID-19 Tracker in accordance with guidelines set forth by SUNY. Campuses that maintain their own COVID-19 dashboards must keep the data in their campus dashboards consistent with the SUNY COVID-19 Tracker at all times. If the campus does not keep its campus COVID-19 dashboard in sync with the SUNY COVID-19 Tracker, the campus COVID-19 dashboard shall be retired. Campuses may provide more information on their individual dashboard than what is currently required in the SUNY dashboard, in accordance with applicable privacy and confidentiality laws, but the core numbers shall be consistent with the SUNY COVID-19 Tracker.

B. Instructional Modalities

Campuses shall report to SUNY System Administration, as a continuation of fall semester reporting procedures, periodic statistical summaries of the distribution of instructional

³For alternative solutions for lip & speech reading during the COVID-19 Pandemic please, please refer to the August 24, 2020 [SUNY guidance](#).



modalities between face-to-face, hybrid and remote methods as adjustments are made during the conduct of the academic semester.

6. What Students Should Know: Transparency

Campuses shall disseminate a clear, plain language notice on “What Students Should Know” to all students. SUNY System Administration will develop a template for campuses to customize. This notice should provide information that includes but is not limited to: testing requirements; mandatory quarantine and isolation; uniform compliance; and the percentage of courses which will be offered in-person, and virtual so they can make informed decisions about their educational experience.

The informational “What Students Should Know” notice should include links or additional information about the specific policies. For instance, students should be provided a copy of the Chancellor’s Uniform Sanctioning in Response to COVID-19 Student Violations and additional Campus-specific sanctioning so they are aware of the penalties for failing to comply with all COVID-19 related testing and safety protocols.

Required Submissions to SUNY:

All notifications of in-person courses in approved categories and/or requests for exceptions for in-person courses to be held prior to February 1 (for both winter and spring terms) must be submitted no later than **December 1, 2020** to provost@suny.edu.

Requests for exceptions to the spring break policy should be submitted no later than **December 1, 2020** to provost@suny.edu.

Please send the updated campus plans for winter and spring terms for review to Valerie Dent at Valerie.dent@suny.edu no later than December 10. Campuses need only submit changes and updates to the fall campus reopening plan, including those elements that specifically address requirements in this guidance.

