

**Fall 2021 Reopening Plan  
Guidance for Faculty and Staff  
August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**Overview**

This document is intended to provide our students, faculty, staff and the broader communities where we work and live, with our plan to reopen our campuses for the Fall 2021 semester. The plan is based on guidance from the State University of New York (SUNY), our local public health departments, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as to how to reopen our campuses most effectively. As with our previous response to the pandemic, our decisions are grounded in practices that place the health and safety of students and employees first. Our intention and hopes are that this document illustrates and supports a culture of safety and concern for the well-being of our community and lays out a strategy to reopen our campuses safely for the Fall 2021 semester.

Given the relatively high vaccination rates for COVID-19 in New York State, the success of the vaccinations in reducing morbidity and mortality associated with COVID-19, and the benefits of other mitigation strategies, New York State witnessed a continued decline in COVID-19 infection rates earlier this summer, leading to Governor Cuomo ending the state's disaster emergency on June 24, 2021. Many of the requirements the College was following were relaxed or removed.

Since then, there has been a strengthening of the Delta-variant of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) which causes COVID-19. This variant is now the dominant strain in the United States and has been demonstrated to be extremely virulent and highly transmissible. The good news is that vaccinations have been found to be effective against this variant and such results strengthen the recommendation that all who can be vaccinated do so. Despite the clear benefits of the vaccines, some fully vaccinated individuals have been found to be susceptible to being infected with the Delta variant and transmitting the virus. At times they have been symptomatic at other times not.

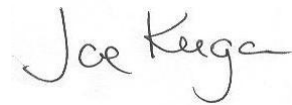
In response, the CDC released additional [guidance](#) surrounding best practices to reducing COVID-19 transmission including a recommendation for “... *universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.*” As we know, masking has been found to effectively reduce spread of the virus and is a relatively minor personal inconvenience that provides major protection for our students, employees, and communities.

With those factors in mind, the College will be following that guidance and **require universal masking for students, employees, and visitors as we enter the Fall 2021 semester**, beginning Monday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021. There are other

guidelines and expectations for those studying, living, and working on-campus which are addressed below. This includes practices related to social distancing, screening for COVID-19 symptoms, and testing for COVID-19.

We are thrilled at the prospects of the start of a new academic year and look forward to having students, faculty and staff return to campus in settings that support and foster the health and well-being of our entire community. These steps will help us realize those goals and contribute to healthier communities and to living safely and successfully with the virus.

We hope that all find this helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Keegan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Joe Keegan  
President  
North County Community College

## General Guidance and COVID-19 Protocols

Based on the most current guidance and recommendations, the following protocols are being enacted for the Fall 2021 semester. As we have learned, the course of the pandemic is unpredictable, and these are subject to change depending on the status of the virus in our region and any new guidance received:

- **COVID-19 Vaccinations**

- **All Students Planning to Be On Campus for Fall 2021**

- New York State has [mandated](#) that all public universities and colleges, including North Country CC, require COVID-19 vaccinations for students who plan to be on campus during the Fall 2021 semester, once the federal government fully approves the vaccine. This includes *those taking courses on campus, accessing the library and learning assistance centers, and living in the residence halls.*
    - At present, the three vaccines in use in the US have not received final approval, however over 70% of adults in the US have received at least one dose and the vaccines have been found to be effective and safe. We strongly encourage students to complete their vaccinations *prior to* the start of the semester, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. This [link](#) provides information where one can get vaccinated.
    - Should one or more of the COVID-19 vaccines currently approved for experimental use receive *full* approval from the FDA, students will be granted a medical accommodation to permit them to remain in on-campus classes/settings while they pursue becoming fully vaccinated.
    - **Once a vaccine is approved**, students will be required to set up an appointment within seven (7) days and provide proof of both the first appointment and, later, full vaccination status to the College. Failure to do so will result in removal from on-campus classes and on-campus housing. Specifics regarding how and to whom students must submit proof will be communicated in the near future through the NCCC email system.
    - The SUNY Chancellor has been charged with implementing a vaccine policy which is anticipated in August 2021. We are expecting that the policy will include details on how best to verify and track vaccination status for students.

- **Allied Health Students:**

- All students, including allied health students, are required to be vaccinated for COVID-19 once the federal government fully approves the vaccine(s). Allied health students (i.e., Massage Therapy, Practical Nursing, Associates Degree in Nursing, and Radiologic Technology) are strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated *before* the start of the Fall 2021 semester. **Without proof of vaccination, we CANNOT guarantee a clinical placement for students which could negatively affect one's ability to complete the program.**
    - Allied Health programs will be collecting vaccination cards from students as well. The particulars will come from each department.

### ***Employees***

- Currently, vaccinations are not mandated for employees, however, we are encouraging and recommending that those who can, do so.

### **Fully Vaccinated**

- To be considered “*fully vaccinated*” one must be 1) two weeks beyond receiving the second dose of a two dose COVID-19 vaccine series (i.e., Moderna and Pfizer), or 2) two weeks beyond receiving a single dose COVID-19 vaccine (i.e., Johnson and Johnson).

### • ***Masking***

- The College is following the CDC universal mask guidelines for those who will be on campus in college-owned buildings. **All students, employees, and visitors who will be on campus in college-owned buildings are required to wear a mask except when in one’s personal room, office, or work location, when eating or drinking while seated, or engaged in athletic competition or practice** (more details about athletics can be found below). Disposable masks will be provided at select entryways.
- For those who work in congregate offices where all parties are fully vaccinated and social distancing can be maintained, masks are not required while working in one’s office.
- Employees who are unable to safely wear a mask due to a disability (as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act), may request exemption from this requirement from our Human Resources Director, Tara Smith at [tara.smith@nccc.edu](mailto:tara.smith@nccc.edu) or (518) 891-2915 ext. 1209. For students, that exemption may be requested through the NCCC Student Life/Health Records Office at [healthrecords@nccc.edu](mailto:healthrecords@nccc.edu) or (518) 891-2915 ext. 1204.
- When in outdoor settings, mask-wearing requirements will follow CDC guidance which notes fully vaccinated individuals are not required to wear a mask and unvaccinated individuals are to do so when unable to socially distance.

### • ***Social Distancing***

- New York State has retained social distancing guidelines of 6’ for those who are not vaccinated inside all College buildings and outside on any College property where social distancing cannot be maintained.

### • ***COVID-19 Daily Screening***

- All members of the college community (i.e., students, faculty, and staff) are encouraged to conduct self-screening for COVID-19 symptoms and remain home and/or seek out medical assistance if signs or symptoms are present.

- We are not anticipating that either daily screening for COVID-19 or temperature checks will be required for employees, students, or visitors at this time.
- **COVID-19 Cleaning and Sanitation Protocols**
  - Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the campus in various locations. We will continue to clean and disinfect high-touch areas daily. We will continue to assess our cleaning and sanitation practices to include or retain those which have been found to be valuable.
- **COVID-19 Mandatory Testing**

All members of the college community, whether vaccinated or not, are encouraged to participate in COVID-19 testing offered by the college. Pooled surveillance testing will be conducted by the College each week and will be offered *at no cost* to students and employees. Regarding testing:

  - **Students:**  
**Mandatory weekly testing is required for students who have not been fully vaccinated or have not provided proof of vaccination status.** All students, whether vaccinated or not, are encouraged to participate in COVID-19 testing. The College will be conducting testing using the pooled saliva surveillance method at *no cost* to students.
  - **Employees:**  
Employees, particularly those who are not fully vaccinated, are welcomed and encouraged to participate in pooled surveillance testing but are not required to.

### **Fall 2021 COVID-19 Protocols and Guidance - Specific**

- **Academics**
  - Courses will be offered in various formats to accommodate student interest and the health concerns of student and faculty. These include in-person, online, and hybrid (partially online and partially in-person). Social distancing guidelines will continue to operate in classrooms, labs, and in other academic settings wherever possible.
  - Instructors and students are required to wear masks when classes are being conducted in person.
  - Because eating and drinking require taking one's mask off and doing so raises the risk of transmission of the virus, they are not allowed in classrooms or other instructional or academic support spaces.
- **Academic Supports**
  - Academic supports including those offered through the Learning Assistance Center (i.e., tutoring, study groups, testing accommodations) and the library will be offered in-person and through virtual settings.
  - As with instructional spaces, food and drink are not permitted to be consumed in these areas, except in one's personal office.

- **Athletics**

- **Intercollegiate Athletics**

- Intercollegiate athletics will resume beginning with Men's and Women's Soccer in Fall 2021, and games/contests will be available for the NCCC community and the public to attend.
    - The College will be following the NJCAA *COVID-19 Guidelines and Recommendations*, Region III *COVID-19 Return-to-Play Guidelines*, as well as SUNY and county local public health guidance.
    - COVID-19 testing, and screening protocols will follow the guidelines for all students (see above). As with all members of the college community, student-athletes are encouraged to participate in weekly surveillance testing for COVID-19 offered by the College.
    - For student-athletes, masking and social distancing requirements will be dependent upon the most current guidance from SUNY, the NJCAA, and county public health officials. At this time, the following guidelines apply and are dependent upon whether practice or competition are taking place *outdoors* or *indoors*.

- **Outdoor Practice and Competition** (*Men's Soccer, Women's Soccer, and Women's Lacrosse*)

- Student-athletes are *not* required to wear masks during practice or competition nor will masks be required if one is on the sidelines or bench during practice or competition. If practice occurs indoors, the masking protocols for *Indoor Practice and Competition* apply (see below).
    - Coaches and support staff will *not* be required to be masked during practice and competition.
    - Spectators will *not* be required to be masked unless social distancing cannot be maintained.

- **Indoor Practice and Competition** (*Men's Basketball and Women's Basketball*)

- Student-athletes will *not* be required to wear masks during practice or competition. Masks *will be* required if one is on the sidelines or bench during practice or competition.
    - Coaches and support staff *will* be required to be masked during practice and competition.
    - Spectators *will* be required to be masked, even if they are fully vaccinated and social distancing can be maintained.

- **Sparks Athletic Complex**

- The Sparks Athletic Complex, including the pool and fitness center, will reopen to the campus community and the public in the fall semester, though at different times. Our first priority is to make sure that our students and employees are able to return safely. Once that is accomplished, we will be able to turn our attention towards doing the same for the public.

- ***Residential Housing and Food Service***
  - On-campus/residential housing will be available on the Saranac Lake campus through the North Country Community College Association. The Saranac Lake campus food service will also be operating and food service options for Malone and Ticonderoga will be explored.
  - Vaccination, masking, and social distancing protocols align with the College's protocols.
- ***Technology Supports***
  - Technology supports through the College's IT Department will be available through both in-person and virtual means.

## **Other COVID-19 Protocols and Resources**

- ***Response Plans***
  - While our hopes are for an academic year uninterrupted by COVID-19, the possibilities of a resurgence of the virus exist. To that end, we have plans to respond and pivot to fully online operations should the need arise.
- ***Meeting Protocols***
  - *Board of Trustees:* with the ending of the COVID-19 emergency by New York State, the Board of Trustees will resume in-person meetings beginning July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021, with Zoom links available for those who wish to join remotely.
  - *College-wide/Departmental Meetings:* we are recommending retaining, where possible, virtual/remote meetings and include remote options when meetings are taking place in person. Given that many members of our community will be working in remote fashion this fall, doing so provides access to them. It also has benefits in terms of reducing travel costs and increasing efficiencies.
- ***Resources***
  - *Vaccine Clinics and Locations:* For location information in New York State, visit this link <https://www.suny.edu/knowyourvax/>.
  - *Mental Health Resources:* For assistance with mental health concerns, visit this link <https://www.nccc.edu/counseling/index.html>.
  - *Frequently Asked Questions:* An FAQ page is included at the end of this document.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS):

- 1. If I decided not to get the COVID-19 vaccine until it has full FDA approval, will I still be able to attend in person classes in the fall?**
  - a. Yes. If there is not FDA approval for the COVID-19 vaccines by the start of the semester, students will be able to attend on-campus classes in the Fall 2021 without being fully vaccinated. However, those who are not fully vaccinated will be required to participate in the weekly pooled saliva surveillance testing.
  
- 2. What happens if the COVID-19 vaccine receives full FDA approval during the Fall 2021 semester? Will I no longer be able to attend classes until fully vaccinated?**
  - a. Once a vaccine is approved, students will be required to set up an appointment within seven (7) days and provide proof of both the first appointment and, later, full vaccination status to the College. Failure to do so will result in removal from on-campus classes and on-campus housing.
  - b. If any or all of the COVID-19 vaccines currently approved from experimental use receive full approval from the FDA, students will be granted a *medical accommodation* which will allow for you to remain in on campus classes while you pursue becoming fully vaccinated.
  
- 3. Are there additional vaccination requirements for students beyond what is expected for COVID-19?**
  - a. Yes. New York State requires all college students enrolled in six (6) or more on-campus credits to be vaccinated against several diseases including measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR). More details are located at <https://nccc.edu/health-records/index.html>
  
- 4. Are there *exemptions* to the need for COVID-19 vaccination for religious or medical reasons?**
  - a. Yes. Students may request an exemption for legitimate medical or religious reasons by contacting the NCCC Student Life/Health Records Office at [healthrecords@nccc.edu](mailto:healthrecords@nccc.edu) or (518) 891-2915 ext. 1204. If provided, exempt students would still be required to wear a mask and participate in weekly testing.
  - b. To be clear, not all exemptions will be granted. We will follow New York State guidelines for those exemptions, which are quite stringent.
  
- 5. Are *medical exemptions* different from *medical accommodations*?**
  - a. Yes. A *medical accommodation* allows the student to remain on campus while they are in the process of receiving the vaccine. A *medical exemption* allows the student to remain on campus without being vaccinated due to medical or religious purposes. In both cases, students will be required to wear a mask and participate in weekly testing.



**6. Will COVID-19 testing be required for Fall 2021?**

- a. Yes. Pooled saliva surveillance testing will be required weekly for those who are not fully vaccinated and are on campus for classes and/or residing the dorms.

**7. Is there a cost for COVID-19 testing?**

- a. There are no costs associated with the pooled saliva surveillance testing that the college offers. There may be costs associated with testing through one's health care provider or local hospital. If concerned about the costs of testing from a provider off campus, it is recommended that one seek out that information before being tested.

**8. Will COVID-19 screening be required for Fall 2021?**

- a. Yes. We will be continuing the practice of having our college community *self-screen* for COVID-19 symptoms and refrain being on campus if any symptoms are present. We are not planning to require electronic screening as we did in Spring 2021.

**9. If I am fully vaccinated, what will I need to provide to the College to show proof of that?**

- a. There are several forms of acceptable proof to include a state, county or provider card that documents the dates the student received the vaccine.
- b. New York States residents also can provide electronic proof via the [Excelsior Pass](#).
- c. Specifics on how to submit those will be forthcoming.