GUIDE TO RETURNING TO RUTGERS

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The past year has brought disruption to our personal and professional lives on a scale that no one could predict. The many serious challenges of the pandemic shook us to our core and tested our resolve in ways that were unimaginable.

Through it all, a dedicated group of our frontline colleagues – custodians, maintenance personnel, operations staff, public safety workers, health care providers, and researchers – have labored on a daily basis to press ahead and keep the university open. We at Rutgers have continued to house students who had nowhere to go, have made invaluable research contributions like the development of the COVID-19 saliva test, and have continued to treat the ill and infirm. We owe these individuals a huge debt of gratitude. We are also thankful to all those who have been able to effectively serve our students and the university despite the challenges of working remotely.

Rutgers has been leading by example in navigating the pandemic. We have employed all the tools at our disposal to keep our community safe. We have been providing face coverings for every community member, conducting weekly surveillance testing of every individual on campus, mandating vaccine for students, making vaccine readily available at all of our campuses, and making the difficult decision not to repopulate too early. The COVID-19 testing statistics, with an infection rate that is a fraction of the overall state rate, are evidence of the success of our approach. As we continue to monitor the public health situation, we are able to update our approach as we repopulate our campuses and buildings.

Our updated strategies, coupled with widespread vaccination and the fundamental understanding of how to co-exist with COVID-19, enable us to repopulate our campuses. While our normal is in fact a “new normal,” different from pre-pandemic, it is nonetheless a vibrant and exciting normal. Since July 6, 2021 our colleagues have begun to return to the workplace, in a staggered and safe fashion. This Guide to Returning to Rutgers provides updated guidance on how we will continue to return in a safe and responsible manner.

We’re looking forward to seeing you in-person on campus this year!
Guide to Returning to Rutgers

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Over the past year, activities at the university have been informed and guided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), requirements of the state (Governor’s Executive Orders, Department of Health Guidelines, Office of the Secretary of Higher education (OSHE) standards), and requirements documented in the Returning to Rutgers document.

As the public health situation in our region continues to improve, Rutgers will continue to comply with state requirements and public health guidelines. State requirements are imposed through Executive Orders from the governor, Administrative Orders from state agencies, and guidance from OSHE. These requirements change frequently, and as such the information in this guide is subject to continual updating.

The Guiding Principles of Repopulation of Our Campuses:

1. We will recognize that there are many employees who never left campus to work remotely, and we are grateful for their service. We will all return in support of our mission of teaching, research, clinical care, and service.

2. To ensure the commitment to the health and safety of our community remains paramount.
   - Public health guidelines will continue to be adhered to.
   - State requirements will be followed.
   - Science will lead us.

3. To recognize that safe repopulation of our university locations remains a shared responsibility.
   - We all have to play a part in keeping our spaces safe.
   - There will be equity in how our units manage the return to campus.
Comprehensive resources regarding health and safety during the pandemic are available here. Employees and students should familiarize themselves with the resources available.

**MY CAMPUS PASS**

We share a collective responsibility to protect one another and ourselves from COVID-19. The shared responsibility for the health and safety of the Rutgers community during the pandemic begins each day with every employee and student planning to be on campus making a quick self-assessment – monitoring for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 before reporting to work or coming to campus. If an employee does not feel well or is sick, then the standard practice of notifying a supervisor and charging the appropriate time-off is mandatory.

The university has developed a screening app, My Campus Pass, available through the myRutgers portal or via the My Dashboard screen. This tool is intended to inform you, the user, and need not be exhibited to gain entry into any Rutgers building. All members of the Rutgers community must use the self-screening tool and be guided accordingly. More information can be found here.
VACCINES
Vaccination is the cornerstone of our foundation of a safe repopulation, and vaccinations are available on campus to all members of the Rutgers community at no cost to the student or employee. The rapid spread of the Delta variant among the non-vaccinated underscores the importance and effectiveness of the vaccine. All employees are urged to get vaccinated. Vaccines are required of students. Click here for details.

TESTING
Individuals who are fully vaccinated, upon uploading their vaccine card to the portal, are no longer eligible to participate in the university’s testing program. Those individuals not vaccinated are required to be tested weekly.

QUARANTINING
Fully vaccinated individuals who are exposed to a positive case of COVID-19 but remain asymptomatic are not required to quarantine and may continue their regular duties. Unvaccinated individuals who are exposed to a positive case of COVID-19 must quarantine, even if asymptomatic.

WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS
All faculty and staff are expected to fully comply with applicable state requirements as well as Rutgers policies, protocols, and guidance related to COVID-19. Failure to do so presents unnecessary risk to our community and may result in disciplinary action.
Best practices with respect to human behavior are critical to co-existing with the virus. Wear a face covering (when appropriate), Watch your distance, and Wash your hands remain our best preventive measures and defenses.

**PHYSICAL DISTANCING**

Maintaining space among individuals is one of the best tools to avoid exposure to the COVID-19 virus and to slow its spread. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay distanced from others, when possible, even if you have no symptoms.

Social distancing is important for everyone, especially to help protect people who are more vulnerable to illness. Employees working in administrative/office areas must follow these social distancing practices:

- Always stay at least six feet from others
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid gatherings

Physical distancing is not required at any outdoor meeting or gathering.
HEATING, VENTILATION AND AIR CONDITIONING (HVAC)

Management of Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems is one component of the overall COVID-19 risk mitigation strategy described throughout this guide. Our experienced HVAC maintenance professionals and engineers manage and monitor all of our infrastructure and continue to manage, monitor, and adjust our equipment as necessary to ensure proper and healthy operation.

All HVAC systems and buildings have undergone:

- Maintenance to ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and provide appropriate indoor air quality for the occupancy level in each space;
- Assessment and, where required, replacement of filters to ensure they functioning appropriately;
- Inspection of filter housings and racks to assure appropriate filter fit and to minimize any air flows around, instead of through, each filter;
- Extended operation of systems to enhance air exchanges throughout our buildings;
- Maintenance to ensure that restroom and other local exhaust ventilation fans are fully functional and operating at maximum capacity;
- Disabling of demand-controlled ventilation (DCV).

Some buildings have operable windows and doors to increase outdoor air flow, when weather conditions permit. In addition, applicable CDC and public health guidance has been taken into consideration and has guided actions taken to address each HVAC recommendation. This information can be found here.
FACE COVERINGS

Face coverings are not required when outdoors on Rutgers property. Face coverings must be worn:

- Indoors in shared spaces (e.g. meeting rooms, conference rooms, breakrooms, copy rooms, etc.)
- Indoors in classrooms, seminar rooms, lecture halls, etc.
- Indoors in private spaces with more than one occupant (shared offices)
- Indoors in public spaces (e.g. hallways, restrooms, stairs, elevators, etc.)

Face coverings are not required indoors when seated in a private office occupied by one person. Face coverings are not required indoors when seated at a workstation, provided that there is six-foot separation from other seated people.

The university will provide face coverings upon request. Employees should review face covering requests with their supervisors.

HYGIENE AND SANITATION

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands with sanitizer and rub them together until they feel dry. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash your hands after touching your face. Sanitizing stations have been placed in building common areas.

While custodial crews will continue to clean office and workspaces based on CDC guidelines, additional care should be taken to wipe down commonly used surfaces. Before starting work and before you leave any room in which you have been working, you must wipe down all work areas with the EPA-registered, 60% alcohol disinfectant provided by your school or center. This includes any shared-space location or equipment (e.g. copiers, printers, computers, A/V and other electrical equipment, coffee makers, desks and tables, light switches, doorknobs, etc.).
The Rutgers workplace will be carefully managed to control risks and ensure the safety of members of our community, as well as the communities where Rutgers resides and serves. Employees must return to Rutgers in a planned manner that results in an appropriately reduced density of occupancy. There must be equity among the workforce in this balanced reduced density – that is to say, there cannot be some who are working remotely full time and causing others to be present at all times.

**PHASED STAFFING**

Phased staffing may be necessary in locations where distancing requirements do not allow for a full repopulation at this time. In those situations, there are several options departments should consider to maintain required social distancing measures.

**Hybrid – Remote Schedule:** Schedules associated with blocks of time, typically in one-week increments, whereby employee cohorts may be in person on the first and third week of a given month and remote the second and fourth week. This would then be alternated with the corresponding cohort. These arrangements, which must be approved by the department head, can be done on other schedules as appropriate.

**Alternating Days/Flexible Work Hours:** In order to limit the number of individuals and interactions among those on campus, departments should schedule partial staffing on alternating days, or allow flexible work hours. Such schedules will help enable social distancing, especially in areas with large common workspaces.

**Staggered Reporting/Departing:** The beginning and end of the workday typically bring many people together at common entry/exit points of buildings. Staggered reporting and departure times will reduce traffic in common spaces.

All schedule and hours of work changes which may be implemented will be done so in accordance with the relevant provisions set forth in the collective negotiations agreements.
REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

Employees who have a medical condition that places them in a higher risk group, or those who are pregnant who wish to seek a reasonable accommodation related to returning to the workplace, should speak to their supervisor to review telecommuting options. If no telecommuting options are suitable, the employee should contact University Human Resources’ Office of Employment Equity.

MEETINGS

In-person meetings are strongly discouraged and all in-person participants must wear face coverings and be seated with minimum six-foot separation. Departments should remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cues in meeting rooms to support social distancing practices among attendees.

During your time on campus, you are encouraged to communicate with your colleagues and supervisors as needed by email, telephone, or other available technology rather than face-to-face. If weather permits, outdoor meetings may be an option for essential in-person meetings.

OFFICE ENVIRONMENTS

Staffing and occupancy of offices must be planned to accommodate distancing. Rutgers has prepared a Guide to assist with planning. If additional help is needed, the Institutional Planning and Operations Facilities Assessment Special Teams (FAST) can be called upon to assist. Click here for information.

If you work in an open floor plan environment, be sure to maintain at least six feet of distance from co-workers. If possible, have at least one workspace separating you from another coworker. Wear a face covering at all times while in a shared workspace/room. Departments should assess open work environments and meeting rooms to institute measures to physically separate and increase distance between individuals:

- Placing visual cues such as floor decals, colored tape, or signs to indicate to individuals where they should stand while waiting in line.
- Posting one-way directional signage for large open workspaces with multiple throughways to increase distance between individuals moving through the space.
- If you work in an office, no more than one person should be in the same room unless the required six feet of distancing can be consistently maintained. If more than one person is in a room, face coverings should always be worn.

Convening in groups increases the risk of viral transmission. Where feasible, meetings should be held in whole or part using available electronic collaboration tools.
RETURN TO THE WORKPLACE

VISITORS
Visitors with no business purpose and other guests are not allowed in workplaces; this includes visitors who may be friends or family of employees. Department heads must carefully consider the need for in-person meetings, and invite visitors with legitimate business purposes selectively. All visitors must be registered using the university’s visitor log, accessed here. This system is the official repository of visitor data for the university. Visitors (those people who are not faculty, staff, students, or patients) must be registered using this platform. This platform replaces any paper logs or local systems that were previously in use. The data will be retained for 30 days and will only be used for contact tracing purposes if needed. Anyone with an active NetID can enter a guest through the system.

LABORATORY WORK
Specific protocols have been developed for faculty, staff, and students undertaking research in laboratory environments. Click here for more information.

TRAVEL GUIDELINES
Rutgers will generally continue its broad restriction on both foreign and domestic travel for University purposes, while allowing limited travel that is explicitly approved as an exception via a waiver process. Click here for more information.

RECREATION CENTERS
Capacity limits at the Rutgers University- Newark recreation center necessitate the continued prohibition of faculty and staff use. Effective August 2, 2021, recreation centers in New Brunswick and Camden will re-open to faculty and staff. Recreation centers may have registration and occupancy rules applicable to their specific location, and patrons must familiarize themselves with those rules.

HOURS OF OPERATION
On-site hours of operation may be affected by limits in staffing. Every effort should be made to model hours of operation as close as possible to those in effect pre-pandemic. Off-site (remote) hours should reflect an employee’s typical work day.
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RETURN TO THE WORKPLACE

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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

This is a difficult time that presents new stressors and burdens on our community members. Please remember that support and guidance services are always available to our students in need through CAPS or UBHC.

MYWELLNESS APP

Rutgers University has launched the My Wellness app, now available within the Rutgers University mobile app and within the MyRutgers portal. The purpose of the app is to support the physical, emotional, and social well-being of the Rutgers community by providing quick and easy access to wellness content from your mobile device. All members of the Rutgers community are encouraged to participate in activities that promote physical, emotional, and social well-being.

Rutgers4U is a confidential support line to offer emotional and therapeutic support during and following the COVID-19 pandemic to Rutgers staff, faculty, and their families. The support line will be operational Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with additional hours to be added. Access the support line by calling 1-855-652-6819.

TELECOMMUTING AND WELLNESS WEBSITE

In addition to the services mentioned above, University Human Resources has wellness webinars and resources already available on UHR's Telecommuting and Wellness site; a selection of digital learning resources has been curated to support your well-being and working in a virtual environment.

COMMON SPACES

Elevators, rest rooms, break rooms, and other common spaces will experience increased foot traffic as the campuses are repopulated. Common sense, the “3 W’s,” and courtesy, are tools that will allow safe use of common spaces.

Restroom occupancy should be limited based on room size to ensure at least six feet of distance between individuals. Whenever possible, no more than one person should be in a restroom.

The general guidelines for keeping yourself and others safe in any environment are no different from those that should be practiced in the restrooms:

- Practice physical distancing and wear a face covering.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Avoid loitering in common areas and placing personal items on restroom surfaces.
- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap.
- Dry hands thoroughly.
- Use a paper towel to turn off the sink and open the door to exit.