



Return to Campus

Town Hall Questions

Last Updated Aug. 13, 2021

Please note: We will be assessing our data and campus data weekly, and make decisions about our operations based on those data and the recommendations from our health department and our infectious disease specialists. If you have questions about your work or workplace, please speak to your supervisor. The [ESOP Return to Campus Committee](#) continues to listen to the concerns of our community and will consider suggestions for solutions to any issues you may be having.

Remote Teaching and Learning:

Q: Under what conditions would the school consider having classes be online rather than in person?

A: There are no plans for campus to go remote this semester, and there is currently no specific off-ramp. Based on our infectious disease specialists, we know that we will see infections from those on campus. However, we know from the Provincetown data more recently, and even our own limited data, that with vaccinations, these infections are manageable. If we start to have transmissions in our buildings, we will need to rethink our approach. Up until now, masking has prevented transmissions in our buildings, including classrooms and laboratory environments.

Safety and Masking:

Q: Can we consider tightening up masking requirements given increasing evidence about increased transmissibility of the Delta variant and reduced effectiveness of vaccines in preventing infection with this variant?

A: Yes! While the UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy has been closely aligned with community standards listed on the University's [Carolina Together website](#), we have exceptions to the types of masks worn and when to wear those masks. We are now asking that anyone in our buildings wears masks consistently, and that no unmasking occurs, unless in a private office or alone in room. All teachers will be asked to wear their masks in the classroom. We have also implemented distancing while individuals are unmasked (e.g., while eating) outdoors. In-person School of Pharmacy events will also now require masking, even while outdoors, and event food

must be served as boxed, individual meals, with limited queues. We also ask that all eating occurs outdoors and distanced.

Q: Can we require faculty and students who are teaching / presenting to keep their masks on while doing so?

A: We are now requiring faculty or anyone teaching / presenting to keep their masks on. We do require masks in our buildings per UNC guidance and Orange County has also reinstated a mask indoor policy. There will be no removal of masks to eat indoors unless you are in an office or in a room alone. We will watch this continually and determine whether we can relax this requirement. While the University still allows teaching without a mask – we are increasing precautions and will require masks at all times in the presence of others.

Q: It has been shown that vaccinated individuals can get, present symptoms, and spread COVID-Delta. Please explain what the school will do to keep individuals safe.

We are listening to everyone's concerns, and many things have been put in place to keep people safe. We encourage you to speak with your supervisor about additional accommodations if you need them. Here is what we have put in place to keep our community safe:

1. Vaccines are available for anyone on campus and in multiple pharmacies and provider offices throughout the region. We encourage everyone who can get a vaccine to do so.
2. Testing is available for anyone on campus through the HallPass app, and through [other areas in the region](#).
3. We have put up barriers in open workspaces to minimize droplet spread
4. We have implemented our pilot program for work flexibility and granted supervisors' requests
5. We have a more rigorous masking policy than campus – we are asking that only using 2 types of masks be used in our buildings because they have been tested and we know that they minimize droplet spread
 - a. We also have good recent data from the ABC Scientific Collaboratory which evaluated COVID19 spread in approx. 1.3 million children going to in-person school during the pandemic from March to June of 2020 using masks and hygiene protocols. Of the 1.3 million, approximately 350 infections occurred (approx. 1 infection for every 3000 children). Based on these data, they have return to school and bus use recommendations with masking, because a significant proportion of spread was aborted by masking. We also have evidence of masks working in our health care systems, with no documented transmissions in our hospitals or clinics, and masks working on campus, with no documented transmissions in our laboratories/buildings.
6. We have upgraded to MERV14 filtration systems in all of our buildings from standard HVAC filters

7. We have sanitizing stations at every entrance to our buildings requesting that hand sanitation occurs before proceeding, and we provide multiple sanitizing approaches in our classrooms, offices, and other spaces.
8. We have wellness and resilience as part of our strategic plan. Our Wellness Committee, headed by Dr. Suzie Harris, has continued to provide many resources to help our community through this time. This information has been communicated weekly in our Friday Wrap-Up and includes resources specific to COVID and return to campus.
9. We are requiring consistent masking in the presence of others, no removal of masks unless alone in an office or a room, and distancing by 6 feet outside if you are removing your mask to eat.

Teaching and Learning:

Q: Do students who must isolate/quarantine have the option for remote learning?

A: Yes, students in isolation or quarantine can engage in the course remotely via Zoom. Course directors are asked to be lenient in providing Zoom links to their course if a student informs you that they have been advised to quarantine or isolate (have them contact the Eshelman Care Team line at 919-813-0481 or submit an [online referral](#)) or are not feeling well. We want to encourage students, faculty, and staff to stay home if they are not feeling well. From past experience on campus last fall and spring, the transmission of COVID has not been attributed in classrooms with masked individuals, but with social events and close contact outside of class where folks are unmasked.

Q: What is the protocol regarding *teaching* if faculty, staff, or postdocs test positive for COVID?

A: If a faculty, staff, or post doc is teaching or supporting teaching and is not feeling well or has been isolated or quarantined according to UNC guidance, teaching of the class can be done remotely or the faculty member may elect to get coverage for the class. They are encouraged to talk with the course director of the course and handle it as they would in any other instance in which they may be sick.

Working Remotely:

Q: Why can't staff who are not student-facing work from home remotely?

A: Staff who were in an approved pilot group for flexible work arrangements or who have an approved ADA accommodation are eligible to work a hybrid model. We will continue to align with the University on remote work options. There is not currently an option for full-time remote work within the UNC system. Any short-term flexible work arrangements (30 days or less) that are needed are at the manager's discretion.

Q: If COVID Delta is so contagious, why must ALL staff be required to be on campus, when we could decrease campus population density?

A: Evidence has shown that masks and vaccines are highly effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19, and reducing the severity and duration of symptoms, respectively. The School is also taking extra safety precautions. The flexible work arrangement pilot programs are still in effect. The University does not currently support a model to offer full-time remote work, but the hybrid model will help decrease population density.

Q: Why do we have to be on campus as opposed to working from home, if we must be in our private offices with our door closed?

A: We are committed to providing a robust residential learning experience for our students. This means campus activities and services for students and employees have returned to on-site operations. Many individuals have been given flexibility within the pilot program. There is no model for full-time remote work at UNC at this time. Based on current data, you do not need to keep your door closed while in your office.

Q: For those who are required to be on campus every day, will there be any opportunity to relook at needs within the School to allow some remote work? For those who have been granted a hybrid model, what mechanisms will be in place to evaluate effectiveness of this model?

A: The School remains aligned with the University and System requirements for remote work. The intent of the pilot groups is to evaluate and assess the balance of onsite and remote work needed to address the new normal on campus. Any long-term revisions to the approved pilot group will need to be submitted to OHR. Please work with your manager and HR Consultant to discuss revisions to approved pilot groups.

Q: Are staff and faculty expected to report to campus in light of the recent cluster?

A: Yes, faculty and staff are expected to return to campus, and procedures are in place to mitigate risks. We encourage everyone to be vaccinated if you can. Vaccinations in combination with masks are highly effective. We will continue with current plans for the fall and with the pilot program. Those that have an approved flexible work arrangement or an approved ADA accommodation through the EOC should follow that guidance.

Travel:

Q: Do you feel like travel will become restricted again? How would this impact conference attendance if already registered? Should we refrain from registering for conferences that are planning to be in-person at this time?

A: We have not received guidance on a change in travel restrictions. The School will continue to align with the University on travel guidance. University-affiliated travel outside of the United States remains prohibited. Students and employees should continue to follow the latest CDC guidance on [domestic travel](#).

Exposures & Positive COVID Tests:

Q: As a parent of a child who isn't eligible for vaccination yet and who will be starting school in two weeks, I'm concerned about the potential for numerous exposures and resulting quarantines that my family will likely experience during the school year. I feel that ESOP has been flexible and understanding about remote work amid difficult circumstances over the last 16 months -- but with the call to return to campus, I am unsure of what to expect now. Can you speak a little to that concern?

A: Managers have the discretion to approve a request for a short-term (30 calendar days or less) flexible work location. We are very supportive of offering flexibility to employees that have childcare concerns, or who are subject to quarantine or isolation. Discussions about short-term flexible work arrangements should be with your manager.

Q: Now that we are in the office, if/when an exposure occurs within my family, what are my obligations (after informing supervisor)? Is there a recommended process?

A: Contact [University Employee Occupational Health Clinic](#) if an exposure occurs for their recommendation. They will talk with you to determine the exposure risk and make recommendations based on your specific situation. If you are fully vaccinated (at least 14 days post-final vaccination) with an FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccination and you've been around someone who has COVID-19, it is likely that you will not be required to quarantine unless you have symptoms. You will be subject to isolation if you test positive. Unvaccinated individuals will be subject to all quarantine and isolation protocols.

Q: What do I do if I have been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19?

Q: What do I do if I am having COVID-19 symptoms?

Q: What do I do if I have tested positive for COVID-19?

Answer to above questions: Please [visit the School's Return to Campus website](#) for the latest information and guidance regarding testing, exposure and what do to if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

Vaccinations:

Q: Are there any plans to audit self-reported vaccination status for students, faculty and/or staff?

A: The university has an audit program to review the accuracy of vaccine reporting. Additionally, as part of its ongoing compliance and enforcement efforts, the University regularly reviews testing data to identify those who are not in compliance with the requirements of the program. At any time, the University may request information or documentation supporting the reason for a missed test to determine whether administrative or disciplinary action is warranted for non-compliance. Should the University request this

information, as set forth in the [COVID-19 Community Standards](#), everyone is expected to provide honest and accurate information.

Students providing false or misleading information for the purpose of avoiding Carolina Together Testing Program requirements may result in restriction on access to or use of University facilities, loss of funding, restrictions on activities and/or suspension or loss of University recognition. The University may also pursue additional disciplinary action in accordance with relevant University policies, including the UNC Honor Code. The University's COVID-19 Administrative Process is posted on the [Student Conduct website](#).

Audits of attestations will occur on a regular basis. Ultimately, students, faculty and staff who are non-compliant or are found to have falsified documents may be subject to disciplinary action.