



# Office of the President

Today marks two years since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. I want to thank all of you for all you have done to support our students and institutions over the last two years and your continued efforts to ensure we have a safe and vibrant spring semester.

Several weeks ago, as I reviewed plans for the balance of the semester with campus leaders, we thought we would have to stay the course with our virus mitigation strategies. I am pleased to say that the state is turning the corner on the virus, and we therefore can relax our pandemic response, including ending the mask mandate effective Monday, April 4, 2022 for all 17 CSCU institutions and system office.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the state Department of Public Health (DPH) have issued updated guidance and mandates which have lifted restrictions on public activities. In particular, the CDC's new metrics related to the virus have deemed that all of Connecticut is at low risk of spreading of virus. Given these changes in guidance and through conversations with DPH, campus leaders, and COVID Coordinators, our consensus is that we are ready to relax our current protocols. Furthermore, although we had an agreement with the bargaining units on COVID mitigation strategies for the fall semester we did not execute an agreement this spring to continue those strategies.

Our campuses will now shift from pandemic emergency response to routine disease prevention. Campus leaders and their teams will continue to monitor state and federal guidance and the community virus conditions. They will be prepared to reinstate mitigation strategies as needed to respond to upticks in cases if and when they occur this spring and in future semesters.

On April 4, the COVID reopen plans that were developed in June 2020 will expire. Effective that day, the mask mandate will come to an end. The campuses will shift to a "mask-optional" protocol. No employee has the authority to mandate the use of masks by others. However, mask wearing remains an effective prevention strategy against the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases, and we fully support and expect all employees and students to respect those who choose to continue wearing masks. Our COVID Coordinators will continue to make masks available for employees and students who want them.

In addition, we will remove physical distancing restrictions in areas such as lounges, cafeterias, conference rooms, and other non-academic setting. However, in most instances, current classroom arrangements will remain as set for the remainder of the semester. Campus leaders are encouraged to plan for more in-person activities including commencements and other special events this spring as well as a full schedule of in-person courses, meetings, convenings, etc. for the summer and fall.

Lastly, we will end weekly testing of employees and students and individual case contact tracing. We have made provisions to continue PCR testing on campus for any employee or student who wants access to testing through April 1. In addition, COVID Coordinators will have antigen tests available for those who are concerned about their potential exposure to the virus and would like access to a rapid test.

We expect employees and students to continue to self-monitor their health and stay home whenever they have COVID-like symptoms and follow current CDC guidance on quarantine and isolation. Employees and students who test positive should continue to follow the campus process for notification. Human Resources, Health Services, or the COVID Coordinator, as appropriate, will determine the quarantine and isolation expectations, confirm when it is safe to return to campus or classes, and notify close contacts as needed.

Thank you again for all your hard work over the past two years. I am very excited that we've reached this point and can move forward having learned many lessons along the way about how to support our institutions, our employees and most importantly our students through a public health crisis.

Sincerely,

Terrence Cheng  
President, CSUC