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Introduction

American University will return to full operations in August 2021. This return is possible due to the development, introduction, and availability of several safe and effective vaccines that provide protection from COVID-19, the wide acceptance of these vaccines, and the resulting high vaccination rates in the United States and in the District, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) area. Based on a body of evidence from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other scientific resources, individuals who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at decreased risk of developing symptomatic or severe infection and are less likely to transmit the virus to others. Communities with high vaccination rates have reduced risk of COVID-19 spread.

Given these factors, American University has implemented a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all faculty, staff, and students with an on-campus presence. Some students, faculty, or staff might not be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine due to medical or other conditions. AU has determined mitigation strategies, accommodations, and policies for these individuals.

The AU Forward: Fall 2021 Health and Safety Plan is based on evolving guidance from the CDC, DC Department of Health (DCDOH), and the American College Health Association. This plan replaces and supersedes the AU Forward: Fall 2020 Health and Safety Plan, the Amended AU Forward Fall 2020 Health and Safety Plan, and the Fall 2021 Health and Safety Plan (June 21, 2021).

As a community we have a collective responsibility for health and safety. We must each make a personal commitment to our shared physical responsibility and recognize that our individual support of the plan and adherence to its standards will serve to enhance the safety of the entire community and create an environment of community care.
University Operating Status

On August 1, 2021, the university will return to full capacity in-person learning with the following strategies to support the return to campus for all students, faculty, staff, and contractors:

- The fall 2021 academic calendar for the university and Washington College of Law (WCL) will be maintained.
- In-person instruction on main campus will return for all classes with fewer than 50 students. Classes with more than 50 students will be online. WCL will determine the appropriate threshold for the law school’s in-person classes. While most undergraduate courses will be held in person, departments may put some sections (particularly for courses with many sections or required courses) online for groups of students who require an online modality (e.g., international students).
- Residence halls will reopen with double occupancy rooms. Residential students who test positive for COVID-19 will be provided isolation housing off site. Non-residential students will be expected to comply with isolation and quarantine guidelines at their off-campus residences.
- On-campus presence and remote work modalities will be managed based on guidance from the Office of Human Resources.
- All academic, administrative, and athletic buildings will reopen.
- Event space reservations will proceed according to established protocols. Regular unit business meetings will be expected to remain virtual with a few exceptions.
- AU Athletics will resume training, practice, and competition in accordance with NCAA, Patriot League, CDC, and DCDOH guidance.
- Official university travel essential for research or the operations of the university will resume with updated approval processes.
- AU Shuttle Services will return to full operation.
- Parking fees will be reinstated, and the Parking Policy will be reinstituted.
- The U-Pass Program will be reinstated for all eligible students.
- All food service will reopen.
Risk Mitigation

The safety and security of the AU community remains our paramount priority, and the safeguards in this plan are designed to mitigate the risk to members of our community of contracting COVID-19 and transmitting it to others.

General public health considerations—such as handwashing, cleaning/disinfection, and respiratory etiquette—are encouraged regardless of vaccination status.

The following health and safety measures will remain until further notice:

- **COVID-19 Vaccination:** All students, faculty, staff, and contractors with a presence on campus or on university-sanctioned study abroad or university-sponsored activities off premises will be required to be vaccinated against COVID-19. AU is committed to promoting a vaccination environment that is safe and equitable for all students, faculty, and staff and has implemented an exemption process for individuals with medical conditions that prevent them from being vaccinated and for individuals with sincerely held religious beliefs that prohibit them from being vaccinated. Please refer to the [Health and Safety Directive on Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination](#) for further information.

- **Testing:** Students, faculty, staff, and contractors with a campus presence who are not fully vaccinated will be required to be tested for COVID-19 at the frequency outlined in the [testing directive](#). Given COVID-19 variants, all fully vaccinated faculty, staff, and contractors may be subject to periodic surveillance testing at the university’s discretion. Any person experiencing [COVID-19 symptoms](#), regardless of vaccination status, must get a COVID-19 test. Please refer to the [Health and Safety Directive on COVID-19 Exposure, Positive Test, or Suspected Infection](#) for further information. PCR tests for COVID-19 are available on campus to students, faculty, and staff in accordance with the [Health and Safety Directive on COVID-19 Testing](#).

Your vaccination status and risk profile determine testing needs and frequency.

**Mandatory testing:**
- Unvaccinated members of our community, required to test twice a week
- Those who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
- Student athletes once a week

**Strongly recommended testing:**
- Immunocompromised and/or family member, including elderly
- Family members unvaccinated (children)
- Faculty teaching without masks
- Community members who received proximity notification
Voluntary/Encouraged:

- Anyone vaccinated seeking to be tested is encouraged to do so, as AU has extensive testing capabilities.
- It is advised, when possible that employees and students utilize on-campus testing for COVID-19, which will enable quick results.

Education: To ensure the highest level of health and safety, the university will initiate promotional campaigns to educate members of our community about the university’s directives, expectations, and practices for COVID-19 mitigation. These campaigns will include posters in visible spaces on campus, social media posts, print communications, and as needed, webinars. University-branded health and safety signs are available for download and printing for university departments to use as needed.

Communications: The university will maintain robust communications protocols to keep our community informed about current and emerging public health directives issued by the city and updates to university operations. These protocols include emails, text alerts, and a website dedicated to COVID-19 announcements, information, and links to ReOpen DC, DCDOH, and CDC.

Health and Safety Pledge/Acknowledgment: All students will be required to sign a Health and Safety Pledge, and faculty and staff will be required to sign an acknowledgement that they will abide by all health and safety regulations imposed by the university and the District of Columbia and practice appropriate health precautions.

Daily Screening: To ensure they are not symptomatic, all students, faculty, and staff who are not fully vaccinated must complete the university’s online Daily Self-Screening Form. Fully vaccinated faculty, staff, and students are expected to self-monitor for symptoms and get a test if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. Hosted campus visitors will be expected to conduct self-screenings prior to coming to campus. Anyone experiencing COVID-19 symptoms must get a COVID-19 test. PCR testing is available to faculty, staff, and students at the campus test site.

Contact Tracing: AU also has established a contact tracing team that follows up on positive test notifications of AU affiliates. These efforts are coordinated with and support DCDOH. The university has issued a directive that all students, faculty, and staff must cooperate with AU and DCDOH contact tracing efforts if they are contacted to provide information. More information about the university’s internal contact tracing and exposure notification process can be found here.

Proximity Surveillance Testing: In addition to individual contact tracing, the university will use a proximity surveillance testing strategy to further ensure the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff and slow the spread of COVID-19. Proximity testing is testing individuals who do not necessarily meet the threshold of a close contact but are known to share a physical setting for a prolonged period with someone who has tested positive.
Examples of groups who share physical settings and may be asked to complete proximity testing include:

- Sports teams
- Faculty/staff departments with communal or shared office spaces
- Residence halls
- Classes
- Clubs (e.g., fraternities/sororities, etc.)

Proximity testing will be recommended when one of the following criteria are met:

- Three or more cases within a 14-day period
- One case with six or more close contacts from the same group are identified
- The case attended a class during their infectious period

Individuals in recognized groups who meet the above criteria will receive an email from the AU Affiliate Notification Team recommending that they participate in voluntary surveillance testing and information on how to get tested.

If you have received a proximity notification, you are expected to continue your campus activities, including attending your classes, as you at this time have not been identified as a close contact and are not required to quarantine. If you develop symptoms associated with COVID-19 at any time, please get a COVID-19 test and self-isolate right away.

- **Face Coverings**: In accordance with the university’s Health and Safety Directive on Face Coverings, all individuals will be required to wear face coverings over their mouths and noses at all times while indoors except when alone inside private offices, in their own residence hall rooms or apartments, when eating or drinking, while teaching or giving a public speech, and in other limited circumstances as outlined in the directive. Face shields do not fulfill the face covering requirement. Individuals are not required to wear masks while outdoors on the university premises unless they are in a group of 25 or more. Individuals who prefer to wear face coverings outside of these requirements are encouraged to do so. We strongly encourage proper masking guidance as detailed by the CDC.

- **Personal Health Precautions**: In addition to wearing face coverings as noted, members of the AU community are expected to exercise personal health precautions through practicing frequent hand washing and respiratory etiquette, monitoring their own health daily, and seeking medical care if symptoms warrant. These precautions not only reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection but also the spread of infectious disease in general. Students, faculty, and staff with signs or symptoms of infectious illness should stay home and seek medical care.

- **Flu**: We encourage all members of our community to get a flu shot. The CDC outlines the similarity of symptoms between the flu and COVID-19.
To give yourself protection against the flu, get your flu shot on campus, which are available to all community members. Students may go to the Student Health Center and staff and faculty are able to register for on-campus shots here.

- **Positive Test Reporting:** The university has issued a directive requiring those who test positive for COVID-19 to notify the university by submitting a Self-Report Form and to follow DCDOH guidance regarding self-isolation.

- **Self-Isolation:** Students who receive University housing are provided isolation housing. We offer supports to students, including daily essentials and other supports. For those students who live off-campus, isolation is required. It is also important to remember that any treatments, i.e., antibodies for COVID-19 symptoms, do not substitute for any length of the isolation period. The isolation period is determined by test date rather than symptom onset.

- **Exposure to COVID-19:** Per DC Health guidelines and in accordance with the university’s health and safety directive on COVID-19 exposure, vaccinated members of the AU community who are close contacts to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to quarantine if they are asymptomatic, but they must self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days following their exposure and take a COVID-19 test 3-5 days after their exposure date.

  If the contact with the positive individual is continuous (such as a household member or caregiver who is unable to separate from the positive individual), the vaccinated close contact is required to take a COVID-19 PCR test every 3-4 days during the positive individual’s isolation period and a final PCR test 3-5 days after their last day in isolation. The close contact is also required to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms throughout the positive individual’s isolation period and for 14 days after they have been cleared from isolation.

  Individuals who are not fully vaccinated will be required to quarantine for 10 days following the date of exposure and self-monitor symptoms for 14 days. Individuals who are not fully vaccinated and in quarantine following a COVID-19 exposure must submit a Self-Report to update the university of their status.

- **Density Management:** Capacity at all indoor and outdoor locations will generally return to full occupancy. The university will consider special events and large gatherings on a case-by-case basis, and density guidelines will be subject to change in accordance with prevailing guidance from the DCDOH and AU event guidance and protocols.

- **Physical Distancing:** Members of the AU community should maintain physical distance where feasible, but the university will not institute a threshold for distancing as locations return to full occupancy. These guidelines are subject to change based on evolving national and local guidelines.

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Faculty, staff, students, and visitors are expected to bring their own face coverings with them to campus. Disposable face coverings will be provided for individuals who forget or lose their face coverings.
Other PPE, such as N95 and KN95 masks, face shields, gloves, etc. are not generally provided by the university, however they may be needed in limited circumstances where work practices require a greater level of protection, such as in clinical and patient care settings. Exception requests for specialized PPE must be made in writing to the Environmental Health and Safety Office, and approval will depend on current OSHA, NIOSH, CDC and local occupational health guidelines.

- **Cleaning:** The university will follow DC Health guidance on cleaning and disinfecting when applicable. Because the risk of COVID-19 surface transmission is considered minimal, cleaning will generally return to normal levels and frequency. Staff and faculty are responsible for cleaning their desks. Units with refrigerators and other kitchen appliances are responsible for the upkeep and cleaning of this equipment. Units are responsible for acquiring and maintaining adequate levels of cleaning supplies for desks, private kitchens, etc.

- **Facility Air Quality/Water Quality:** Increased standards of air quality in all buildings will continue, using upgraded HVAC filters when available and/or changing filters on a more frequent basis. Also, outside air flow will remain higher and to a level that will not compromise the space conditioning of any building. Water systems have been properly managed and maintained during remote operations to ensure water quality and safety.

- **Space Management:** Plexiglass partitions will remain at reception desks, customer service desks, cash registers, and residence hall entry desks. Special purpose locations such as breakrooms, community bathrooms, and lounges will require users to self-regulate use to ensure appropriate health and safety. With the exceptions of reception desks, partitions will not be provided for meetings in individual offices (see Offices/Workspaces section).

- **Classrooms:** In-person instruction on main campus will return for all classes with fewer than 50 students. Classes with more than 50 students will be online. WCL will determine the appropriate threshold for the law school’s in-person classes. While most undergraduate courses will be held in person, departments may put some sections (particularly for courses with many sections or required courses) online for groups of students who require an online modality (e.g., international students).

Individuals attending university classes must wear face coverings in accordance with the Health and Safety Directive on Face Coverings. Class participants may occasionally drink in class as needed for general health and hydration. No eating will be permitted in classrooms during designated class periods.

Our faculty are able to conduct lecture without masks, per our directive on face coverings, where we have a list of exceptions. These exceptions stem from the DC mask mandate, which also explicitly states an exception for public speaking.

If a student is uncomfortable with a faculty member not wearing a mask, we encourage the student to have a conversation directly with the faculty member, as outlined in Provost Starr’s guidance memo.
• **Offices/Workspaces:** Given the vaccine requirements, faculty, staff, and students can meet in offices if mask mandates are followed. Exempted unvaccinated staff or faculty sharing workspaces may work with the Office of Human Resources and their managers on alternate office space arrangements (including staggered work arrangements, installment of plexiglass, or relocation of space). With the exception of reception desks, partitions will not be provided for meetings in individual offices. Individuals meeting with others in their offices must abide by masking directives and should attempt to physically distance to the extent possible. Most offices allow for physical distancing during a meeting. If an office layout does not permit distancing, faculty or staff members should work with their units to arrange for use of larger, department-controlled spaces.

• **Event and Space Requests:** Units will continue to host regular staff meetings virtually to ensure that university spaces are utilized at an optimal level, prioritizing space needs for classes, student engagement, and major campus-hosted events. Units may obtain exceptions to virtual meetings for retreats.

• **Athletics:** Special considerations have been made for the safe operation of university athletics programs, with the priority of athlete health and safety. Protocols for athlete and spectator masking, team travel, meals, practices, games, and more will be outlined in the Athletics COVID-19 Fall Operating Procedures document. Beginning in fall 2021, athletes are required to have weekly COVID-19 tests.

• **Dining/Catering:** Dining and catering services will follow DCDOH guidance on food and beverage safety and management. AU Dining will be fully operational with appropriate density for the TDR. For more information on food operations on campus please refer to the [AU Dining website](#).

• **Child Development Center:** The Child Development Center will be open. More information can be found in the Child Development Center’s Parent Handbook and COVID-19 Supplement.

• **ADA Accommodations for High-Risk Community Members:** The university has taken several measures to address the health concerns of AU community members who meet the high-risk threshold. Students can seek accommodations through the Academic Support and Access Center. Faculty and staff members can request ADA accommodations through the Office of Human Resources. ADA accommodation only applies to the person affiliated with AU. Family members or persons within the same household who have medical conditions are not covered. Faculty and staff members may apply for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

• **Special Health Considerations:** Individuals who have been informed by their physician or healthcare provider that they have a weakened immune system may need to continue to take additional precautions to protect themselves when they participate in campus activities that require a physical presence, regardless of their vaccination status. These individuals are encouraged to consult with their physicians for additional guidance.

• **Travel:** An interim travel approval process will be implemented for university authorized, sponsored, or funded travel including study abroad programs, timely or critically needed faculty and graduate level research and
grant-related travel, participation in dual-degree programs, travel for NCAA-sanctioned athletic competitions, admissions and recruitment activities, and individual staff travel required to carry out critical functions related to the AU mission. The university will review travel requests and make informed decisions regarding the risks posed by travel, particularly to destinations which may not be safe due to local COVID-19 conditions. AU authorized or sponsored travel within the DMV region will not be applicable to the travel approval process. Additionally, personal travel plans not related to or sponsored by AU will also be excluded from this process.

- **Case Counts and COVID Dashboards:** Data on COVID-19 cases among AU community members (students, faculty, staff, and contractors) who are in the Washington, DC, area and other relevant information will be posted on the university’s COVID-19 Confirmed Cases webpage.

- **Variants:** Due to the rise of COVID-19 variants in the community, symptomatic breakthrough infections in fully vaccinated individuals are anticipated. The evidence is still strong that the vaccines protect against severe symptoms (hospitalization and death) in vaccinated individuals exposed to the virus, and vaccinations are still our primary defense against the COVID-19 pandemic. Increases in COVID-19 cases and/or disease outcomes among fully vaccinated AU community members and/or within the DMV may result in DCDOH reinstituting, intensifying, or implementing certain prevention strategies. The university will notify the community of any changes in guidance.

- **Health Privacy and Confidentiality:** The university will ensure compliance with employee confidentiality and medical privacy laws. Faculty and staff are not required to provide personal health records such as COVID-19 vaccination cards as part of the attestation process but are subject to university audit upon request. Student COVID-19 vaccination records will be maintained in a HIPAA-compliant portal that houses all student vaccination records. The university has taken these initiatives to ensure a fair and equitable process around vaccine verification and testing/tracing of positive cases. Faculty, staff, and students are expected to respect others’ rights to medical privacy. Community members may not request vaccination information, test result documentation, or information about past COVID-19 infections from others. Community members in hosting visitors for events/programs do have the right to request vaccine status as part of event planning and management.

- **Visitors and Public Events:** All campus visitors will be expected to abide by applicable university health and safety guidelines including checking for COVID-19 symptoms prior to coming to campus, not coming to campus if experiencing symptoms, and abiding by any additional measures as outlined by the event coordinator/host and all posted signage.

The library is open for visitors this fall.

- **Hosting Events:** University community members hosting events or programs on the university premises or in affiliation with the university will be responsible for:
• Maintaining a roster of attendees, including names, phone numbers, and email addresses of all in attendance for contact tracing purposes. Attendance records must be kept on file with the hosting department for at least one semester or three months (whichever is longer) and be made readily available to contact tracers upon request.

• Designating an emergency contact and alternate contact who can provide attendance records should contact tracers need to request them.

• Promptly notifying covidnotification@american.edu if they become aware of a positive case that was present at the event or gathering.

• Setting clear health and safety expectations prior to the event for attendees on topics including vaccination requirements, masking, and self-screening.

• Complying with all other requirements for visitors and public events as determined by the university.

This is a fluid situation and subject to change as the COVID-19 landscape evolves.

• Internal Events and Gatherings: Gatherings with 25 or more individuals consisting of only university affiliates must adhere to all current masking and capacity requirements. Event coordinators will be required to maintain a roster of attendees, including names, phone numbers, and email addresses of all in attendance for contact tracing purposes. Attendance records must be kept on file with the hosting department for at least one semester or three months (whichever is longer) and be made readily available to contact tracers upon request. Recognized student organizations may be subject to less stringent standards given that maintaining a list may not be feasible as events may not always be planned with prior registration. Recognized student organizations should work with the Center for Student Involvement.

• Absence and Leave Policies: Students who are sick or will be absent from class and/or need support for an extended period should contact their academic advisors and/or Dean of Students Office. Protocols for notification of absences will be outlined in the faculty and staff guidance. Brief student absences (missing 1-2 scheduled events) from classes and other university programs for COVID-19 symptoms will not require a physician’s note for an excused absence. Students and instructors will work together to determine appropriate make-up plans for any in-person activity missed for COVID-19 symptom related reasons. Students who are required to self-isolate following a positive COVID-19 test or are instructed by a health authority to quarantine following an exposure may be required to provide documentation.

Faculty and staff members may not come to work and must get a test if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If complying with quarantine or isolation requirements prevents any faculty or staff member from working because their presence on campus is required, such employees should contact employeerelations@american.edu. Employee Relations will consult with the staff or faculty member regarding available leave and related information; coordinate with the supervisor, dean, or department chair; and facilitate return to work.
Faculty and staff may find guidance that addresses a range of possible scenarios, and outlines leave options for situations involving quarantine, positive COVID tests, and local school closures or restrictions. The options include scheduling flexibility, short-term alternative class arrangements for faculty, and timesheet procedures. Faculty-specific information can be found on the Provost’s website, and staff information is available on the Human Resources website.

Resurgence Plan

American University can enact procedures to quickly return to remote operations should there be a resurgence of COVID-19 that compels DC government to return to Phase One of the city’s reopening plan. Should circumstances require students to remain on campus, American University will provide for their safety and essential care.

Coordination with the District of Columbia

American University will continue to cooperate and coordinate with District of Columbia governmental agencies tasked with planning for, responding to, and managing the effects of COVID-19. Specifically, AU will follow the guidance developed by the DCDOH and will align with public health protocols issued for each phase of reopening. While the university will not be more lenient than DCDOH guidelines, there may be instances where the university will be more restrictive in the application of certain protocols to achieve a unified community approach to certain precautions.

The following members of the AU leadership team have been appointed to liaise with the city on matters of COVID-19 health and safety:

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<th>Dr. Fanta Aw</th>
<th>Dan Nichols</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vice President of Campus Life and Inclusive Excellence</td>
<td>Assistant Vice President, Risk Management</td>
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Beyond Fall 2021

This plan will be updated in the months ahead based on the trajectory and velocity of COVID-19 transmission in the District, Maryland, and Virginia; direction from government officials; and expert advice on how to mitigate risks to keep our students, faculty, staff, and contractors safe. It relies on the full understanding, support, and cooperation of every member of the AU community.

AU supports the health and well-being of the AU community through integrated programs, education, and resources that encourages positive daily habits that support your health and well-being. Our goal is to provide you with the tools needed to make the best possible choices to live a balanced and healthy life as we return to campus.

Additional Resources:

- Fall 2021 Health and Safety Summary
- Fall 2021 PPE Guide
- Fall 2021 Events Planning and Space Reservations Guidelines
- Contact Tracing and Affiliate Notification Program
- Webinar Slides: Community Forum on Contact Tracing, Health and Safety
- COVID Conversation Tips