

onevcu | RESPONSIBLE TOGETHER

Virginia Commonwealth University Return to Campus Plan
Dec. 18, 2020

This plan has been reviewed by the State Council of Higher Education and has been found to be compliant in containing the required components of the Higher Education Reopening Guidance, which was developed in consultation with the Virginia Department of Health.



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Overview

One VCU: Responsible Together is Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) plan for a measured, phased and agile return to campus. This plan establishes how we teach, interact and conduct daily life on campus, as well as multiple contingencies for how we will continue to carry out the mission of our university and academic medical center under various conditions. References to campus activities apply to all in-person activities no matter their location. This plan was developed through collaboration between VCU and VCU Health System and will continue to be updated as additional information becomes available.

Guiding principles

Our priority is safely executing the university's mission, which is the basis for the guidelines established for our return to campus:

- We will follow applicable Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state and VCU Health System guidance.
- We will evaluate and implement, where appropriate, personal protective equipment (PPE), face coverings, supplies, policies, procedures, education, screening, tracing, testing and vaccination protocols to support this plan.
- We will continue physical distancing practices.
- We will clean and sanitize facilities in line with CDC guidelines.
- We will support accommodations or provide flexibility for members of the VCU and Richmond community when applicable.
- We will be flexible to address new situations, including anticipated waves of COVID-19 and changes in requirements, guidelines and best practices.
- We will monitor the health of our community and respond promptly to any increase in infection rates consistent with the advice of medical and science professionals.

One VCU: Responsible Together Response Team

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, VCU identified a response coordinator and deployed an Incident Coordination Team (ICT) consisting of university and health system leadership as well as health, safety and science experts. The team and its various subcommittees meet regularly. The ICT allows for a collaborative and coordinated response and a decision-making structure to plan and address pressing needs. The following ICT structure is in place:

- COVID-19 response coordinator
- Executive Committee
- Subcommittee chairs
 - Subcommittees:
 - Communications and Government Relations
 - VCU Health System Advisors
 - Safety and Health
 - Faculty and Staff HR, Employee Health Team
 - Research and Animals

- Institutional Equity
- Academic Affairs Teams
 - Student Services
 - Instructional Continuity
 - International
 - Strategic Enrollment Management
 - Experiential Learning and Community Engagement
 - Communications

In addition to the Incident Coordination Team, a Public Health Response Team monitors health conditions across the university, as well as guidance from the CDC and Virginia Department of Health (VDH), to make recommendations for the appropriate response.

The following groups also support the One VCU: Responsible Together plan:

- HR professionals – In collaboration with school/division leadership, each HR professional completes a staffing plan identifying the work status of each employee. Employees are identified as on-campus or telework.
- Return-to-campus coordinators – Return-to-campus coordinators work with their deans/department heads/vice presidents, building managers and the staffing plan to coordinate the implementation of public safety measures and availability of supplies for those learning and working on-campus.
- Building managers – Building managers assist with supply distribution, supply inventory, facility signage and readiness, cleaning and closing, if required.

Resources

Fostering the safety of our students and employees takes a team effort. The university provides the following resources to support the well-being of our community:

- Symptomatic and at-will testing (PCR) at no cost
- Personal supplies for on-campus students and employees including washable cloth face coverings, hand sanitizer and disinfectant spray
- Facilities cleaned at an increased schedule with focus on high-touch surfaces in common areas
- Cleaning supplies in numerous locations
- Hands-free temperature screening stations in high-traffic areas
- Website and app for daily health monitoring surveys
- Required training for students, employees and managers
- Communications campaign and signage with a focus on responsibility of students and employees
- Guidance for managers and employees on telework, leave and resources

Responsibilities

The One VCU: Responsible Together plan establishes responsibilities for every student and employee. Each semester, all students and employees (faculty and staff) are required to complete a training so they have a better understanding of the steps being taken by the university to promote their health and safety, as well as an understanding of their expected contributions to the health, safety and success of the VCU community. Students and employees sign an attestation indicating training completion and a commitment to personal compliance with the following public safety measures:

- Maintaining physical distance, wearing face coverings, handwashing and all other public safety measures
- Cleaning and applying disinfectant to personal and shared spaces before and after use
- Requirements for daily health monitoring
- Testing requirements
- Reporting symptoms and COVID-19 symptoms to Student Health Services or Employee Health
- Isolation and quarantine requirements and procedures
- Caring for others' health and well-being
- Staying informed with the most current information about health and safety at VCU

Academic calendar

The spring semester will begin with a phased re-opening of our campuses in early January. The health sciences schools, college research faculty, staff and trainees will be the first to return to campus. The official start of most spring semester undergraduate and graduate courses will be Jan. 25, slightly delayed from our previously scheduled start of Jan. 19. Spring break is canceled; however, two reading days were added to the academic calendar. Important dates are listed below, and the full academic calendar is available at academiccalendars.vcu.edu.

- Jan. 25 - Official start of most spring semester undergraduate and graduate courses
- Feb. 23 - Reading day
- March 24 - Reading day
- May 5 - Last day of classes, Monroe Park Campus (exams to follow)
- May 7 - Last day of classes, MCV Campus (exams to follow)

These changes, based on recommendations from public health experts, are designed to reduce the amount of travel to and from campus, and to help avoid the height of flu season.

Public safety measures

We each have roles and responsibilities to promote safety in our learning, work and living environments. Students and employees returning to campus will be required to comply with the following safety protocols.

Daily health monitoring

Students and employees are required to complete a daily health survey. This survey can be accessed online and via the VCUMobile app. The survey asks respondents if they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Symptoms in the survey are based on CDC-published COVID-19 symptoms.

Students and employees with symptoms are directed to isolate and avoid going to work, class or other in-person community or clinical engagements and to contact the VCU MYCOVID (1-804-MYCOVID) call center as well as their personal health care provider immediately.

- Students receive reminders for daily health monitoring. The Dean of Students office is notified after repeated non-compliance. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.
- Employees receive reminders for daily health monitoring. Managers are notified after repeated non-compliance. Disciplinary action for employees who fail to comply may be up to and including termination.

Face coverings

The use of face coverings is required in common interior spaces, including building entry areas, conference rooms, hallways, elevators, restrooms and parking decks while on campus. Face coverings are recommended but may be removed when outside as long as individuals comply with the current physical distancing guidelines. Face coverings include masks, bandannas, scarfs or any other cloth material that covers the nose and mouth. Face shields are not considered face coverings.

Employees do not have to use face coverings in private offices with at least 6 feet of distance to the nearest hallway if the door is closed. Residential students must wear face coverings while navigating residence halls outside of their room, suite or apartment.

Face coverings must also be used by faculty in classrooms. As an additional safety measure, if the faculty member cannot maintain 6 feet of physical distancing, plexiglass podiums may be installed.

As with all health and safety protocols, non-compliance with the use of face coverings is subject to disciplinary action for students and employees.

Cleaning and disinfecting procedures

VCU's cleaning and disinfecting guidelines are based on guidance from the CDC, state and VCU Health System. The university's custodial staff will frequently (i.e., at least twice daily) clean and apply disinfectant to high-touch surfaces (i.e., frequently touched surfaces), such as door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, restroom surfaces, railings, water fountains and tables, in common areas of occupied buildings.

- Cleaning and disinfectant application is conducted per CDC guidance.
- Custodial staff use industrial-grade cleaning equipment and disinfectant cleaners, such as Virex® II 256 (a disinfectant cleaner concentrate), that kill 99.9% of microorganisms on contact and are certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as effective against coronavirus.
- Unoccupied residence hall rooms and spaces are cleaned, treated with disinfectant and locked. This process will continue when current spaces that are occupied are vacated prior to occupancy.
- University common areas and offices and labs to which custodial staff have access will continue to be cleaned and treated with disinfectant.

Students and employees are responsible for applying disinfectant to their personal work spaces, rooms and belongings before and after use. For instance, employees are responsible for treating their computers and workstations with disinfectant, and students will be responsible for cleaning personal electronics, residence hall rooms and classroom work areas.

To the extent possible, VCU minimizes shared computers and uses dedicated student supplies. Where not possible, VCU provides disinfectant so that individuals can clean the materials before and after use.

Cleaning and disinfecting supplies

VCU Facilities Management will provide disinfectant supplies, including hand sanitizer and disinfectant spray stations, throughout campus based on supply. VCU will provide returning students and employees with supplies that include launderable face masks, disinfectant spray and hand sanitizer. Supplies will be available at multiple locations on campus.

Centrally located distribution areas were identified for the staging and continued distribution of cleaning supplies and student/employee personal supply refills.

Laboratory cleaning following potential exposures

Departmental Return to Campus Coordinators (RTCCs) will notify Principal Investigators (PI) if their laboratory may have been potentially exposed to COVID-19. The lab will be closed, and the PI will have 24 hours to select one of the three cleaning and disinfection options. The PI is then responsible for contacting their respective Campus Coordinator within 24 hours of receiving the notification email. Facilities Management will move forward with Option One if the Campus Coordinator is not notified within 24 hours.

In order to protect sensitive equipment or research, laboratory locations may be cleaned and disinfected by the occupants using a pre-approved SOP that meets CDC standards.

Entry Pass

Entry Pass is a digital tool that shows if students and employees are in compliance with completing daily health checks and/or asymptomatic surveillance testing. Entry Pass is available in the VCUMobile app and will soon be available online. Starting in January 2021, all students and employees will be required to use Entry Pass to access certain VCU facilities.

Those who complete their [daily health check](#) and comply with [asymptomatic surveillance testing](#) will use Entry Pass to more easily access certain campus facilities. Students and employees without an Entry Pass, as well as those who do not complete their daily health check or do not comply with surveillance testing, may face building access restrictions and/or disciplinary action; building access will require a safety protocol review with an entry attendant and, in some cases, building access may be denied.

Public health testing, screening, monitoring and response

Public Health Response Team

VCU established a Public Health Response Team (PHRT) of which membership includes leadership, public health medical and science experts, and emergency management and higher education administrators from across the university and VCU Health System. The Public Health Response Team (PHRT) serves as the principal liaison with the VDH.

Primary VDH contact:

Melissa Viray, M.D.
Deputy Director
Richmond City and Henrico Health Districts
(804) 482-5485 (office)

Secondary VDH contact:

William (Bill) Edmunds
Director of Process and Evaluation
Oversight
Virginia Department of Health
william.edmunds@vdh.virginia.gov
(804) 221-1582 (cell)

The PHRT seeks to identify trends and outbreaks and recommend actions through the following activities:

- Monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 in the VCU community and develop protocols for response to rise in incidence rate
- Develop protocols for call center operations and contact tracing team
- Manage response to local outbreaks of COVID-19
- Make recommendations to VCU administration regarding local and general closure

The VCU Public Health Response Team membership includes:

- Tom Briggs, assistant vice president for safety and risk management (co-chair)
- Scott Strayer, department chair and professor, Department of Family Medicine and Population Health (co-chair)
- Tilahun Adera, division chair and professor, Division of Epidemiology
- Gonzalo Bearman, Richard P. Wenzel Professor of Medicine and chair, Division of Infectious Diseases, hospital epidemiologist
- Mike Cimis, director of environmental health and safety
- Jeff Collins, director of sports medicine
- Lori Dachille, director of emergency preparedness
- Alex H. Krist, associate professor, Family Medicine and Population Health

- Anton Kuzel, chair, Department of Family Medicine
- Mike Porter, associate vice president for university public affairs
- Gavin Roark, director of residential life and housing
- Margaret Roberson, director of University Student Health Services
- Susan D. Roseff, professor and vice chair, Department of Pathology, vice chair, Division of Clinical Pathology
- Frank Tortorella, director of employee health services
- Melissa Viray, deputy director of Virginia Department of Health, Richmond City and Henrico Health Districts
- Suzie Weaver, executive director of the life safety office at VCU Health System

Screening and testing procedures

The screening and testing of the VCU community continues to evolve based on the availability and efficacy of viral testing protocols as well as guidance from the CDC, VDH, the state and the VCU Health System. Based on PHRT recommendations, viral PCR tests will be used for all testing methods.

Entry testing

Entry testing refers to testing residential students prior to move-in or after extended breaks. To help mitigate COVID-19 positive individuals returning to campus housing, VCU will test all residential students prior to their return to campus. This purpose and approach is consistent with current CDC guidance on the use of testing to determine whether any additional actions are needed based on test results.

Symptomatic testing

VCU community members (both on and off campus) who report symptoms to either Student Health Services or Employee Health Services may be referred for COVID-19 testing at a testing location on-campus. This will be conducted at no cost to students or employees.

Asymptomatic surveillance testing

Asymptomatic surveillance testing for the prevalence of COVID-19 in the VCU community will be conducted throughout the year to monitor the health of our community. This data will help identify trends and outbreaks and to inform operational decisions.

Beginning January 2021, asymptomatic surveillance testing (previously referred to as “prevalence” testing) will be mandatory for residential students, students who attend on-campus classes and employees who work on campus. Surveillance testing requires VCU to test a sample of asymptomatic VCU community members monthly — approximately 5% of residential students and approximately 2% of non-residential students and employees. These approximate percentages may be adjusted based on existing conditions and on recommendations from the PHRT. During the regular school year, testing takes place Monday through Thursday.

At-will testing

A limited number of “at-will” COVID-19 testing appointments are available on a first-come, first served basis Monday through Thursday for VCU students and employees as long as they are asymptomatic, have not been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 and do not already have a scheduled test as part of the asymptomatic surveillance testing process. At-will testing is voluntary and will be offered at no cost.

Reporting process

VCU’s MYCOVID call center (1-804-MYCOVID or 1-804-692-6843) connects students and employees with University Student Health Services and/or Employee Health to access testing options and next steps. Students and employees who test positive, experience COVID-19 symptoms or who have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 must use the MYCOVID call center to report to Student Health Services or Employee Health. The call center is a shared service with VCU Health System.

Student Health Services and Employee Health care providers will refer students and employees to appropriate testing, isolation and/or quarantine procedures as applicable. Student Health Services and Employee Health coordinate isolation and quarantine with VCU Residential Life and Housing as needed and notify VCU Facilities Management to initiate cleaning and disinfecting when a positive or presumptive positive case is identified. When a positive case is identified or reported, Student Health Services and Employee Health also notify VDH and VCU’s contact tracing team to begin the contact tracing process.

Contact tracing

Contact tracing is a trusted public health tool used to prevent further spread of contagious diseases. Contact tracers are trained public health professionals who find people who test positive for an illness, or those who might have been exposed to an illness, and provide guidance on how to stop its spread (e.g., testing, isolation, quarantine, etc.).

VCU partnered with VDH to train a team of 10 to 20 contact tracers dedicated to the VCU community. In addition to training, VDH provides contact tracers with computers and phones. Daily management of the contact tracing team is performed by VCU. This collaboration allows VCU contact tracers to access and use VDH information systems for contact tracing.

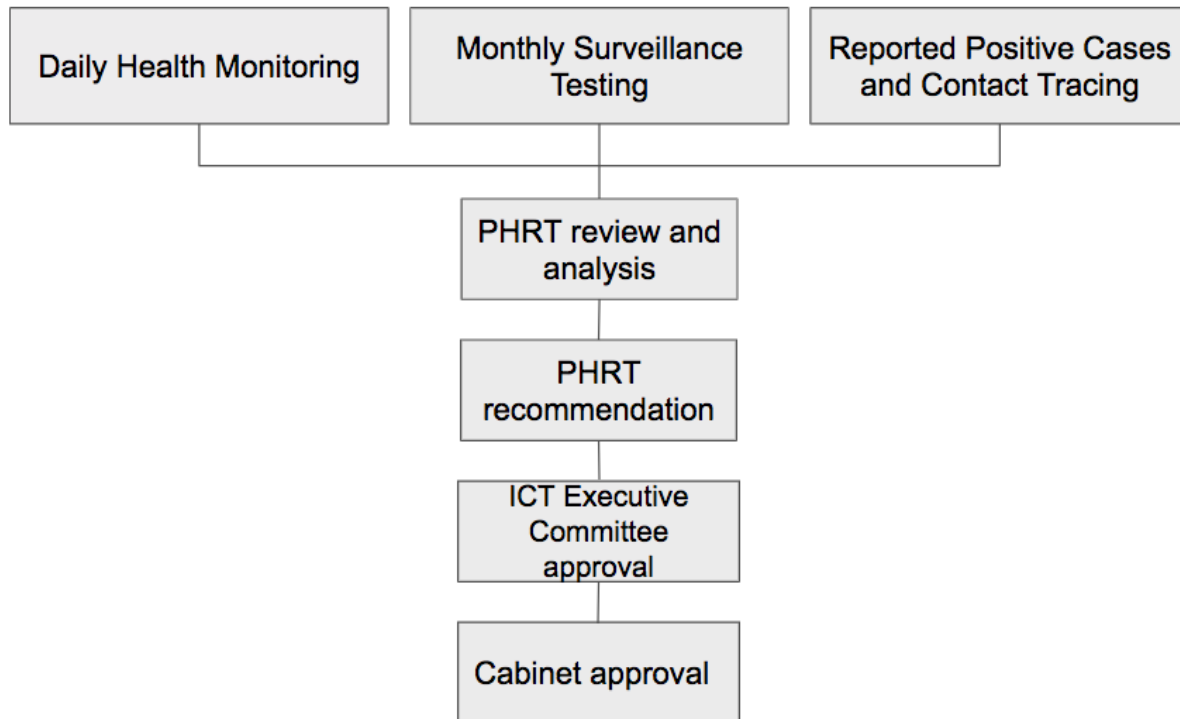
Quarantining and isolating

Students and employees who test positive for COVID-19 or who are diagnosed as having COVID-19 by a health care provider will be advised not to report to in-person work, class, or other community or clinical engagements until cleared by Student Health Services or Employee Health. “In-person,” regardless of location, includes student clinical training and other experiential learning activities off campus.

- Students living on-campus will be instructed to quarantine, if exposed. Students testing positive will isolate in designated on-campus isolation housing; basic needs will be coordinated with VCU Dining Services, and medical case management will be facilitated by Student Health Services. Returning home or to a location with friends or family after testing positive for COVID-19 is not recommended by VCU’s Public Health Response Team; however, students may elect this option after considering the risk of transmitting the virus to others (for example, having a high-risk family member).
- Students living off-campus and employees will quarantine or isolate at home or other appropriate locations.
- Student athletes will follow quarantine guidance based on VDH, NCAA and A-10 guidelines.
- Students and employees who are exposed to someone who has a positive viral test or a clinical diagnosis for COVID-19 shall quarantine for no less than 14 days after their last exposure. If they have no symptoms after 14 days, they may return in person to work, class, or other community or clinical engagements.
- Students can contact Student Health 10 days from the date of their positive test to get cleared to return to any in-person university activity, including class.
- Faculty and staff can contact Employee Health 10 days after their symptoms clear for permission to return to campus or any other VCU location. Employee Health will send employees an email formally authorizing their return.
- VCU recommends that all students returning to VCU and surrounding communities from destinations abroad follow CDC guidelines and stay home for 14 days upon arrival in the U.S., avoid being around people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 and consider getting tested for COVID-19. Students residing in VCU residence halls should contact University Student Health Services and refer to the [Residential Life and Housing website](#) for additional quarantine and isolation requirements. Residential students must have a negative COVID-19 test result prior to move-in. Residential students who travel from locations outside of the U.S. may be required to quarantine on campus until they receive a negative test result.

Campus outbreak management

VCU's Public Health Response Team will review testing data, monitor positive cases and clusters, and make recommendations to the ICT Executive Committee and President's Cabinet regarding outbreak management.



Monitoring and response

The Public Health Response Team will monitor COVID-19 cases on campus. There are three ways to determine a need for an isolated or partial shutdown: daily health checks, prevalence testing and reports of positive cases.

If a cluster of cases occurs in one of our residence halls, for example, then the PHRT will work to determine if the hall needs to be closed and how infected students will be isolated. VCU has 160 beds for quarantine/isolation of residential students. If 50% of the isolation beds are occupied with positive COVID-19 cases, then the PHRT may consider recommending some form of closure, either of the dorms or of portions of the campus. The same would be true if a cluster were in specific classes, labs, buildings, etc.

If prevalence testing for the community shows an increase disproportionate to the prevalence in the greater Richmond community, the epidemiologists at VCU Health and VDH will be tasked with determining potential causes and making recommendations. Again, if a significant portion of our student body is affected, then partial campus closure may be the recommendation.

VCU will consult with VDH before taking any action.

Reducing campus activity

In the same way that VCU returns to in-person activity using a phased approach, reducing in-person activity will follow the same use of phases. For example, if in Phase 4, VCU will reduce staffing and in-person instruction to Phase 3 and, if necessary, Phase 2.

Phase I

Employees: Designated employees and those supporting clinical operations are on campus; all others telework

Students: A limited number of Health Sciences students on campus for clinical placements and those research activities associated with clinical research

Instructional spaces, studios and laboratories: Research labs are limited to 200 square feet per researcher

Work meetings: Telework, in-person meetings discouraged

Events*: None

Social gatherings:** None

Phase II

Employees: Employees supporting clinical rotations and research are allowed on campus

Students: A limited number of Health Sciences students on campus for clinical placements and those research activities associated with clinical research

Instructional spaces, studios and laboratories: Research labs are limited to 200 square feet per researcher

Work meetings: Essential in-person meetings only, limited to fewer than 10 people

Events*: None

Social gatherings:** None

Phase III

Employees: Approx. 50% of non-designated employees that cannot work effectively remotely return to campus

Students: All Health Sciences students; research related activities; community placements; residence halls, studios and laboratories are open. Student athletic activities take place.

Instructional spaces, studios and laboratories: Studio occupancy will be based on reduced density with a maximum of 36 square feet per person. Libraries and lounge areas are limited to 30% code occupancy and research labs are limited to 200 square feet per researcher

Work meetings: Limited to less than 10 people

Events*: Limited to a maximum of 25 individuals or 30% occupancy in public assembly spaces, whichever is less

Social gatherings:** Limited to a maximum of 10 individual

Phase IV

Employees: Approx. 100% of non-designated employees that cannot work effectively remotely return to campus. All positions needed to support the in-person student experience return to campus. All others continue teleworking.

Students: Same as Phase III

Instructional spaces, studios and laboratories: Classroom and studio occupancy will be based on reduced density with a maximum of 36 square feet per person. Libraries and lounge areas are limited to 30% code occupancy and research labs are limited to 200 square feet per researcher

Work meetings: Limited to less than 10 people

Events*: Limited to a maximum of 50 individuals or 30% occupancy in public assembly spaces, whichever is less

Social gatherings:** Limited to a maximum of 50 individuals or 30% occupancy in public assembly spaces, whichever is less

* Events are those activities not strictly intended for instruction, but which support the mission of the university. These include, but are not limited to, the following: Performing arts, concerts, sporting events, movie theaters, amusement parks/fairs and art exhibits.

** A social gathering includes, but is not limited to, parties, celebrations, or other social events that do not have an education or instructional benefit, whether they occur indoors or outdoors. The presence of more than 10 individuals performing functions of their employment or assembled in an educational instructional setting is not a “gathering.”

Considerations regarding student health and safety on campus versus leaving campus will be determined on a case-by-case basis by Student Affairs.

Communications plan for dismissals/shutdowns

The communications plan for dismissals/shutdowns follows our emergency communications protocols with amplification so that messages are received and understood by students, faculty, staff and parents.

- Mass email to the entire university community (students and employees) from the Office of the President; posted on president’s blog
- One VCU: Responsible Together website home page posting; university homepage website posting; VCU Alert text message and posting; VCU mobile app alert; VCU News posting
- VCU social media postings: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- One VCU: Responsible Together student update and faculty staff update (emailed)
- Academic and Student Affairs email and website updates each to students and faculty
- VCU Administration email and website update to university employees
- Individual school and college digital communications to their students and employees (email, social media, websites) that reiterate university messages and are customized for school/college situations
- Professor communications to students through email, Blackboard, social media
- Student Affairs email advisory/website posting to parents

Collaboration with VCU Health

VCU and VCU Medical Center will collaborate fully in this endeavor. Our COVID-19 call center and contact tracing team will be shared, and VCU Medical Center will provide epidemiology support for the PHRT. Also, a VDH representative will advise the PHRT in the event of an outbreak.

Communications

VCU deployed the following communications strategy to effectively keep the VCU community up-to-date on COVID-19 and reopening plans. VCU’s messaging principles include clear, consistent, timely, transparent and relevant communications that address the needs and concerns of all community members. VCU provides a website as a source of current information as well as an email address for questions from the VCU community. A weekly newsletter is emailed to students and employees and posted on the website. Communications are managed per VCU emergency protocol: universitywide, high-level messages developed and coordinated by University Relations with units contributing information specific to their audiences. Messaging and communications assets are established at the university level, with units customizing

messages for their appropriate use. The VCU Incident Command Team Executive Committee approves universitywide messages.

The One VCU: Responsible Together campaign builds trust, engages students and employees, manages expectations and raises awareness. It is the umbrella under which VCU establishes campus operations under changing circumstances and creates acceptance that we are all in this together to promote a safe, healthy environment. See the full website at <https://together.vcu.edu/>.

Key messages

- The health and well-being of our students, faculty, staff and patients is critical in conducting the missions of our university and its academic medical center.
- It will take each of us acting responsibly together to live, learn and work.
- VCU operations and public safety measures are thoughtfully planned and conducted following applicable CDC, state, city and VCU Health System guidance and with gathering ongoing input from students and employees.

Tactics

- One VCU: Responsible Together website: together.vcu.edu
- One VCU: Responsible Together email address: together@vcu.edu
- Weekly newsletters -- one to students and one to employees
- Broadcast/mass email
- VCU social media
- Virtual forums with student, faculty and staff groups as appropriate
- Safety protocol signage throughout campuses branded with One VCU: Responsible Together
- Individual school and department communications to their students and employees (email, social media, websites) that reiterate university messages and are customized for school/college situations

External community engagement

The Center for Community Engagement and Impact coordinates outreach and communications to area neighborhood associations regarding university return-to-campus plans. The planning team includes Student Affairs, VCU Police, University Relations and Government Relations. The purpose is to update area residents on university operations, and hear feedback and concerns that will enable the university to address issues proactively and responsibly. This initiative includes development of a process and protocols for responding to concerns.

The campus experience

Instructional activities

VCU will offer in-person, in-person blended learning, and exclusively online course offerings. On-campus courses may be smaller because of physical distancing requirements, and some classes may require groups of students to alternate in-person attendance. In addition, more online courses will be available.

VCU will promote physical distancing as a means to limit the spread of infectious disease. At this time physical distancing guidelines include maintaining at least 6 feet between individuals and limiting large meetings or other gatherings to no more than 10 people in meetings or 50 people in a classroom environment. These guidelines will be reviewed and adapted based on applicable CDC, state and VCU Health System guidance.

Specific guidance is as follows:

- Occupancy is based on reduced density with an absolute minimum of 36 square feet per person in classroom environments. Libraries and lounge areas are further limited to one-third code occupancy, and research labs are limited to 250 square feet per researcher.
- Elevator occupancy, generally, will be no more than two people per elevator.
- Teleworking for staff and remote learning for students will continue to be used as necessary or advisable.
- Physical distancing in VCU-owned or -operated transportation will be maintained.

In areas where physical distancing is not possible, the use of engineering controls (such as barriers, filtration, etc.), floor markings to identify waiting locations or path of travel (e.g., “stand here” signage or arrows), or personal protective equipment for higher-risk individuals (such as N95 respirators, face shields or gloves) is recommended. Students and employees are required to wear face coverings in all VCU buildings.

Clinical and other instructional activities

Students enrolled in both clinical and experiential learning activities (e.g., internships, practicums, field experiences) are required to follow all VCU health and safety protocols. Students with clinical placements must also follow all applicable government guidelines, including any updates to executive orders from the governor. VCU provides appropriate PPE if the clinical or experiential learning site is unable to do so. Clinical students have the option of postponing clinical training without academic penalty aside from potential delayed graduation.

The VCU Center for Community Engagement and Impact and VCU REAL developed a Risk Acknowledgement Form for students enrolled in both clinical and experiential learning activities, designed to inform students about what they can expect at VCU instructional sites and what to do if they feel precautions are not being followed. The form will be disseminated to students through a variety of communications channels including the required student training, the TelegRAM (VCU’s daily newsletter) and direct emails to students enrolled in VCU REAL courses.

Faculty leading off-campus experiences are also asked to disseminate a Health and Safety Notification letter to their partnering organizations, informing them of the safety measures VCU takes to keep their organizations safe, as well as the university's expectations of their learning sites. This partnership notification outlines the minimum health and safety expectations and is not intended to supersede more specific agreements that may already be in place.

Both forms are hosted on the REAL website at real.vcu.edu/offcampus/.

Outside the classroom

Plans related to student services and activities include changes to building operations, environmental adjustments, and changes in occupancy/capacity to promote appropriate physical distancing and programming. Building density, group gatherings and events are restricted based on directives from the CDC, the state and VCU Health System. Examples include:

VCU Libraries

Campus libraries are open with limited services, spaces and hours. For instance, open study space and computing at both libraries have reduced numbers of seats and computers to reinforce expectations for physical distancing. Main service desks at both libraries will be open for lending of materials and assisting users with use of library spaces and collections. VCU Libraries will reduce staff/patron contact with circulating materials, including pulling materials through a paging system, offering front door pickup services for materials, and/or implementing new procedures at service desks that do not require staff to touch materials being borrowed.

University Student Commons, Hunton Student Center and Larrick Student Center event space

There will be limited access points for the University Student Commons and Hunton Student Center, which will be restricted to VCU students, faculty, staff and contractors. Access to the Larrick Student Center will be managed by VCU Recreational Sports. The VCU community may host events in compliance with applicable health and safety precautions without advance approval; however, non-university events are generally prohibited while restrictions are in place. Safety measures include hand sanitizer available at access points and appropriate signage throughout facilities, website and traditional media regarding physical distancing, hand washing, face masks, activity zones and the latest CDC guidelines.

VCU Recreational Sports

VCU segmented open floor space using stanchions, floor tape, and signage. Density for recreational sports activities is controlled by having users reserve time and space in advance. VCU Rec Sports offers group exercise classes at reduced capacity and expanded virtual programming. To minimize contact with high-touch points, water fountains are deactivated; however, touchless water bottle fillers remain available. There are no high-contact or indoor team-based sports available. Masks are required at all times during indoor activities, except while swimming, showering, or drinking water. For any outdoor activities where 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained, masks are required.

On-campus housing

VCU Residential Life and Housing modified the housing move-in calendar, based on the academic calendar changes, to assist with safely returning residents to campus and moving in new residents to campus. Some residents living in on-campus apartments will remain on campus during the winter break period. To maintain proper physical distancing and other precautions during move-in, VCU will provide a scheduled move-in approach for residence halls. Move-in will be a multiple-day process with various move-in blocks. Residents will only be allowed to bring two guests to help them move in. Residents and guests are required to wear face coverings throughout the move-in process.

All residents must follow VCU's safety protocols during and after move-in. Residential Life and Housing works with partners across VCU to assist with the transition back to campus and minimize the spread of COVID-19 with the following measures:

- Sanitizer stations installed in residence halls.
- Housekeeping staff will clean common areas, bathrooms and other high-traffic areas more frequently. This is a team effort, and students will be asked to do their part on keeping these areas clean. For example, students will be required to wipe down any surfaces in common areas before and after using them.
- Some common areas will be closed off, and other common area spaces may be modified to allow for appropriate physical distancing. For example, plexiglass barriers will be installed in certain high-traffic areas. This allows for closer interaction between residents and staff through the barrier.
- Residential Life and Housing set aside approximately 160 rooms for potential isolation and quarantine needs.

The standard guest policy is suspended for the 2020-21 academic year. Resident assistants will work with residents to create physically distant interactions for the hall communities to connect and support one another during this time. Residential students will only be able to access their assigned residence hall using their VCU ID card.

Dining

VCU Dining Services facilities are limited to 50% occupancy load (per fire code) or 6 feet of separation between guests, whichever is less. Staff use counters to monitor reduced occupancy loads. Mobile ordering will be available in the spring semester with a mixed model of dine-in and take-out options. To further limit exposure to high-touch points, VCU Dining Services has implemented the following:

- Contactless payment solutions at all cashier stations.
- Signage on particular items such as drink dispensers, napkins, silverware, etc. to indicate this is not a self-serve option and is staffed by a VCU Dine associate.
- Customers will not be allowed to fill personal drinking cups and mugs. Disposable flatware and cups will be provided. Single-use condiments are provided or may be served by staff depending on location. Additional trash receptacles have been placed in strategic locations to help with additional overflow of single-use items.
- “Commit before you choose” messaging to avoid unnecessary touching of food options.

VCU Dining Staff are required to participate in a rigorous eight-hour safety and sanitation food handlers certification and are required to test for knowledge. Certification is granted upon completion. Staff participate in daily training on pandemic-plan hygiene standards and are included in all pre-service meetings. Individuals in temporary positions are trained on all standards before working at any location.

VCU Dining Staff are screened prior to beginning their shift. Staff experiencing any symptoms related to COVID-19 are not permitted to work. Staff are given timers to wear as reminders to stop and wash hands. Timers also serve as a reminder to those responsible for cleaning and sanitizing high-touch points.

Staff are placed at strategic locations throughout dining locations to provide additional cleaning and sanitizing of door handles, stair rails, tables, chairs and items considered high-touch points every hour during operating hours. Safety ambassadors are identified by a special uniform at each dining location and will be the point person for those who have questions about food safety and sanitation.

Student health

Student Health Services

University Student Health Services continues to offer primary care health services. Students with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 have a telehealth visit. They are referred to VCU Health for testing at no cost to the student. They may see their primary care provider if that is more convenient. Student Health provides telehealth appointments for students if their medical issue does not require an in-person visit. If an in-person visit is necessary, students are called on their cell phone to enter the waiting area when their clinician is available for their appointment. Visitors are not permitted at appointments, and students are screened before entering the clinic with temperature checks and health questionnaires.

Immunizations have changed from walk-in hours to scheduled appointments on each campus due to physical distancing requirements. These clinics are off-site to allow adequate space for physical distancing. During flu season, it will be challenging to differentiate between viral illnesses including influenza vs. COVID-19. Flu shots have been promoted, and students are able to schedule an appointment to receive their flu shot at no charge.

University Counseling Services

University Counseling Services continues to provide telemental health as the primary mode of treatment. In the event that a student has limited access to a private space once they return to campus, UCS makes several offices available to students for telemental health appointments.

In-person visits are limited to students who would most benefit clinically from such interactions, including crisis counseling, counseling for individuals unable to access telemental health or other circumstances for which the mental health professional believes an in-person visit carries significant benefit.

The student's well-being is assessed via asking basic questions before meeting with a clinician. Students experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19 are asked to speak to their treating

physician before meeting in person with a UCS clinician. Students advised against in-person sessions will continue to have access to telemental health services.

Both University Student Health Services and University Counseling Services take the following precautions to help contain the spread of COVID-19:

- Plexiglass has been added as necessary to front desks to increase safe interaction between staff and students who may need an in-person appointment.
- Floor decals have been placed to remind students to maintain physical distancing.
- All paper products such as magazines and brochures have been removed from each clinic's waiting area.
- Seating has been replaced with plastic chairs on each campus to allow for disinfection.
- Transition to electronic payments decreases touch points for staff.
- Both clinical and administrative staff have received additional training on PPE, cleaning protocols and physical distancing.
- Work schedules have been staggered or rotated to promote telecommuting.
- PPE and disinfection supplies remain limited, and the partnerships with VCU Facilities and the VCU Health System will continue.

Orientations

Orientations are online for winter 2020-21.

Student and family orientation

Orientation consists of a series of modules released on Dec. 7 for students to complete at their own pace. There is also one required virtual meeting and an opportunity for connecting with other students at a virtual panel and networking event. VCU recognizes the important role of families and will provide a virtual family orientation experience at no cost to families.

International student orientation

To promote the safety of students and practice physical distancing, VCU's International Student Orientation will be held online this year. The Global Education Office's website features a series of online modules covering campus safety, health insurance, living in Richmond, getting involved on campus and more: <https://global.vcu.edu/students/started/>. International Student Orientation is available online, with a final module on immigration services to be launched in early January 2021, for the spring semester.

International students

VCU recommends that all students returning to VCU and surrounding communities from destinations abroad follow CDC guidelines and stay home for 14 days upon arrival in the U.S., avoid being around people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, and consider getting tested for COVID-19. A student arriving less than 14 days before the start of classes can contact their faculty in advance of the first day of classes to discuss options for remote learning during this time. Students residing in VCU residence halls should contact University Student Health Services and refer to the [Residential Life and Housing website](#) for additional quarantine and isolation requirements. Residential students must have a negative COVID-19 test result prior to move-in. Residential students who travel from locations outside of the U.S. may be required to quarantine on campus until they receive a negative test result.

Travel

University-sponsored travel

University-sponsored international travel for faculty and staff to U.S. Department of State Level 1 or 2 countries must be approved by the provost and vice president for academic affairs or the vice president for health sciences and CEO of VCU Health System. University-sponsored travel to Level 3 or 4 countries remains suspended.

University-sponsored domestic travel out of state for clinical and research purposes is permissible with the approval of the senior vice president for health sciences or the provost.

Members of the VCU community are encouraged to limit personal travel. We encourage students and employees to refer to the CDC and U.S. Department of State to be fully informed of potential health risks and travel restrictions that may be in place.

On-campus travel

VCU shuttle service (RamRide and RamSafe) will enhance daily cleaning and install hand sanitizing stations. VCU partners with the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) to provide travel options for students and employees including intra-campus travel. GRTC will enhance daily cleaning, install sanitizer dispensers on all vehicles, redistribute buses to high-ridership local routes and require cloth face coverings. Additionally, VCU will provide a temporary physical-distancing shuttle on weekdays.

Events

No large extracurricular or group gatherings will be hosted on campus at this time. VCU will follow applicable CDC, state and VCU Health System guidance as they evaluate when and how to begin hosting events on campus.

Psychological readiness

VCU Institutional Equity, Effectiveness and Success, in partnership with VCU Human Resources, developed an additional complementary psychological readiness and training course to support a safe and healthy learning and work environment. The training addresses psychological (i.e., mental and emotional) awareness and readiness as we return to campus, and emphasizes the university's commitment to inclusion, nondiscrimination and equity.

The workplace

Employees who can telework successfully and who are not required to be on campus will continue to telework.

Face coverings or masks are required in all common areas. Face coverings or masks do not need to be worn when an individual is alone in an individual office with a closed door and at least 6 feet from a common space. Employees are responsible for cleaning and applying disinfectant to personal workspaces using at the beginning and end of each workday.

Shared equipment and appliances must be cleaned with disinfectant before and after use. Meetings are conducted virtually as often as possible. For meetings that cannot be conducted virtually, conference rooms must allow for 36 square feet per participant, no more than 50 percent capacity. Rooms, tables and chairs must be cleaned with disinfectant by meeting participants after usage.

Occupancy of break rooms and use of coffee makers, microwaves, etc. will be limited (or eliminated) to promote appropriate physical distancing and sanitization. Usage of shared refrigerators is discouraged. Employees are only permitted to eat or socialize together if at least 6 feet apart.

Hallways, pathways, queuing areas and restrooms will have signage indicating protocols for physical distancing compliance. Plexiglass shields will be installed in welcome centers, direct customer service centers and other high-contact areas. High-touch items such as magazines, common pens, etc. will be removed.

Flexibility and accommodations

For students

- VCU implemented a temporary policy for the 2020-21 academic year for managing COVID-related absences which can be found at <https://provost.vcu.edu/planning/absence/>. Further, VCU recognizes that some students who previously did not need Section 504 Academic Accommodations, and who have a qualifying condition or disability, may now need support or assistance.
- A modified approach for the temporary and more permanent need for accommodation was developed and implemented to provide students with full access to programs and activities related to their academic majors.
- Student requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis so the university takes a personal, individualized approach to accommodations. Students should share their need for an accommodation with the Student Accessibility and Education Office, or for MCV Campus students, the Division for Academic Success. Once accommodations are approved, implementing them may also involve input and collaboration with course instructors.

For employees

- Employees at increased risk for severe illness according to the CDC and the Virginia Department of Health, and who also have been informed that they need to return to campus for work, may request flexibility in work arrangements through the university ADA/504 coordinator. Employees should discuss with their manager and their HR professional any other alternative work arrangements.
- Managers are instructed to demonstrate flexibility in developing staffing plans, particularly for those caring for others or who have concerns about working on campus. Management options include:
 - Continued telework if this has been a successful arrangement
 - Alternative schedules to limit contact with other employees
 - Usage of leave if there is no work or limited work that can be performed remotely. Employees may request up to 30 days of leave without pay if leave balances are exhausted.
 - Faculty will work with their department/unit on their return-to-campus plan.

Sick leave policies and practices

- Additional forms of state and federal leave are available to faculty and staff whose work is affected by COVID-19 either as a direct result of the virus or as a result of the need to find accommodations for child care due to school, camp and daycare closures due to the virus. Available state and federal leave hours may be used continuously or intermittently.
- Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) – Federal emergency leave through Dec. 31, 2020
- Public Health Emergency Leave (PHEL) – Up to 80 hours of state emergency leave during the public health emergency, which will continue in 2021.
- FFCRA Emergency Family and Medical Leave (EFML) – Emergency family and medical leave through Dec. 31, 2020
- Leave carryover is permitted for all university and classified staff and 12 month faculty into 2021.