



Memorandum

Date: March 25, 2021

To: President Brian W. Casey

From: Geoff Holm & Paul J. McLoughlin II, on behalf of the Task Force on Reopening Colgate

Subject: Summer and Fall 2021 Reopening Recommendations

The Task Force on Reopening the Colgate Campus has met weekly throughout the spring semester, both with the Health Analytics Team and independently, to monitor the operationalization of this academic year's reopening plan, to assess the current health status of the Colgate community, to redefine the Gates, to explore questions related to vaccinations, and to look ahead to the fall semester amidst the ever-changing guidelines and reopening of the country.

Over the last several weeks, we spent extensive time reflecting on the emerging data related to vaccinations and variants of SARS-CoV-2. We have considered the quickly-shifting attitudes toward public health precautions and the implications of these changes on the campus operations for the 2021 fall semester. We explored multiple scenarios: from opening fully to opening with significant modifications, such as the need for continued physical distancing in all classrooms with concomitant schedule modifications to allow for full in-person instruction. As the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines evolve, most recently by decreasing the physical distancing requirements from six feet to three in K-12 schools, and relaxing the travel restrictions at the state and federal levels, the Task Force was required to plan for the fall semester with many unknowns - a reality that has framed our work for more than 10 months.

Based on the Task Force's analysis (and some necessary assumptions), we make the following recommendations, anticipating that i) all faculty and staff who would like a vaccine will be able to secure one; ii) epidemiological evidence will continue to support the early findings that vaccines are efficacious against currently-known variants of the virus, and are moderately-to-largely effective in preventing asymptomatic transmission; and, iii) epidemiological research continues to support the low risk of transmission within classroom settings worldwide. We are also hopeful that the Biden

administration's promise of readily available vaccines to all adults (persons over 16 years) by the end of May will mean that any student who wishes to be vaccinated will have access to one prior to the start of next academic year.

The Task Force recommends reopening the campus to students for in-person instruction, assuming that State and local guidelines and our own internal health metrics (as monitored by the Health Analytics Team), indicate that it is appropriate. The Task Force recommends that the default planning model should be fully residential, with full in-person classes, though with the expectation that the University may need to adjust as needed to public health conditions.

The Commitment to Community Health, as a community public health compact, was instrumental in establishing and enforcing behavioral standards that limited the potential spread of SARS-CoV-2 in the Colgate community during this past academic year. However, continued enforcement of a restrictive public health code of conduct beyond the current academic semester is likely not feasible due to community fatigue and mixed messages throughout the nation around infection control measures and restrictions. Further, there is emerging guidance for vaccinated individuals that would require a nuanced approach that would be difficult to enforce (recent CDC guidance permits two asymptomatic vaccinated individuals to share space without the need for physical distancing or face coverings, for instance.) Therefore, in consideration for opening in the fall with full in-person classes, the Task Force does not advocate for guidelines that rely on the current Commitment to Community Health, knowing that it will not likely be practiced by students outside of the classroom. Thus, as will be discussed below, we recommend that employees and students re-commit to public health principles that are much more modest than those we have adhered to this last year.

We submit these recommendations with the caveat that we need to continue to be flexible in our planning and adjust as needed. The summer months are likely to be the best months we have seen in this pandemic with warmer weather and increased vaccination rates throughout the United States. Some nations, however, (including Canada and a number of countries in Europe) are experiencing new rises in infection rates in advance of widespread vaccination; it is also likely that virus variants with potentially altered transmission dynamics will continue to arise. As always, the Task Force holds firm in our convictions that Colgate's model of residential education is important and powerful, and worth the challenges it entails, even during a pandemic.

Whatever the summer and 2021-2022 academic year holds, we take comfort and pride that we will be, as always, Colgate Together.

Respectfully submitted,

The Task Force on the Reopening of the Colgate Campus

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The remainder of this memo articulates specific recommendations.

Campus Operations

The Task Force recommends that the default planning model should be fully residential, with full in-person classes, though with the expectation that the University may need to adjust as needed to public health conditions.

The Task Force recognizes that the University has been balancing multiple public health threats, including spread of SARS-CoV-2; the ongoing health risks of COVID-19 to the campus and greater Hamilton community; the mental health of faculty, staff and students; the implications of faculty and staff fatigue; and the declining support for public health restrictions. As we are now in a phase of the pandemic where the widespread deployment of vaccines may continue to limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the Task Force has shifted the emphasis of its focus to consider how to return to in-person, residential education that resembles pre-pandemic times. Epidemiological research supports that (i) vaccinations are effective at reducing the chance of contracting COVID-19, (ii) vaccinations reduce the likelihood of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 among asymptomatic individuals, and (iii) vaccinations are effective against known variants of SARS-CoV-2. The Task Force is also operating with the assumption that vaccines will be readily available to all members of the campus community by August 2021; together, these factors have guided our planning.

If additional variants emerge that cause symptoms for vaccinated individuals, or if the CDC's recommendations and guidance change, the Task Force feels confident that the flexibility the University exhibited in February and March 2020 would once again be deployed to return to a semester with modifications and restrictions, guided by the experiences with remote learning and physically distanced classrooms that we have gained during the current academic year.

As New York State continues to reduce restrictions related to infection control, the Task Force predicts a much different approach than we have seen for the past 13 months. Similarly, the federal government has focused its efforts into vaccination distribution and more readily available testing. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has also prioritized the full return to K-12 education by the fall. With these in mind, the Task Force recommends that the default planning model should be fully residential, with full in-person classes, though with the expectation that the University may need to adjust as needed to public health conditions. It is no longer reasonable to assume that the currently conservative approach by the New York Governor's office will be in place by August 2021.

We recommend retaining the use of the Wendt University Inn for the fall semester.

While we understand the University was preparing to turn it over this summer for use as an additional University hotel, we believe it wise to retain its use as possible isolation or close contact quarantine space for those students who may not yet have been vaccinated. We also understand that several Off-Campus Study Programs may be canceled this fall due to ongoing travel restrictions and US State Department Warning Levels, and it may be helpful to have the Wendt as overflow housing for these students.

Academic Calendar

We recommend adhering to the academic calendar for the 2021-2022 academic year, that was previously approved by the Academic Affairs Board, with no modifications to arrival dates, breaks or recesses, or campus departures.

Health and Safety Rationale

Research ([March 2021](#) and [April 2021](#)) supports the fact that classrooms were not a significant source of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, even when the virus was at its peak nationally. While these studies were done with physical distancing and face coverings in place, these data support the notion that in settings with face coverings, there is a much lower risk of transmission. In fact, one of the more [risky activities](#) for viral transmission is eating and drinking, because of the lack of face coverings during these activities, and this is occurring on campus every day within dining halls. Therefore, the Task Force realized that planning classrooms with physical distancing was less effective than considerations about face coverings and regulating other, more risky activities such as eating and drinking. The Task Force is also confident that even without physical distancing among students within classroom settings, faculty members are able to choose to practice physical distancing from the front of the classroom should they desire.

Decisions related to requiring face coverings on campus should be made closer to the start of the fall semester, following CDC guidance and any state regulations in place, though it is now clear that wearing masks in public settings is an effective means of reducing the spread of many respiratory illnesses, including the flu. That said, it may not be feasible to enforce consistent use of face coverings. As is always the case, faculty members may set their own course policies and choose to require face coverings

in their instructional spaces. With this in mind, **The Task Force recommends following Madison County and CDC guidelines that are in place closer to the start of the 2021 Fall semester.**

Vaccination Considerations

We recommend planning for a vaccine clinic during the summer for all faculty and staff members who have been unable to secure a vaccine on their own within the state. Ideally, students would receive a vaccine during the 2021 spring semester or over the summer so that they are fully vaccinated by the end of the semester and would not need to worry about leaving and returning with the need to quarantine. This summer clinic should also be open to all eligible students who are here for summer research, international students, and the Office of Undergraduate Scholars Summer Institute.

We also recommend inviting international students who were unable to receive vaccines in their home countries back to campus early (two weeks before the start of the new student arrival) in time to allow them to receive a one dose vaccine (e.g. Johnson and Johnson), if possible.

Planning should commence, once more is known, about the possibility of a clinic for vaccine boosters this fall just as the University does annually for the influenza vaccine.

At this time, the Task Force does not recommend requiring COVID-19 vaccines for any campus community member (students, staff and faculty).

While we strongly recommend community members to receive a vaccine, we know that there is a myriad of reasons, whether personal or medical, why this may not be practical. Current vaccines are being administered with Emergency Use Authorization by the Federal Drug Administration. Until and unless these vaccines receive non-emergency use approval, we do not recommend requiring vaccination among members of the Colgate community.

We recommend requiring those who have indicated they have been vaccinated to show documentation to substantiate their inoculation. Because the Task Force is recommending continued surveillance testing for non-vaccinated individuals (see next section below), it is important that we include all non-vaccinated individuals in this testing protocol.

It is important to note that non-vaccinated individuals would be required to quarantine for up to 14 days if they are identified as a close contact of a SARS-CoV-2 positive individual. So, not only does vaccination reduce one's risk of contracting SARS-CoV-2 or infecting others as an asymptomatic individual, it also eliminates the need for close contact quarantine.

Testing

The Task Force recommends surveillance testing of individuals who have not been vaccinated by the start of the fall 2021 semester, in order to reduce the chance of asymptomatic non-vaccinated individuals from infecting others with SARS-CoV-2.

Non-vaccinated individuals must understand that they will be required to go into isolation if they test positive during surveillance testing (and their close contacts will be required to go into quarantine if those individuals are not vaccinated.)

Compliance with surveillance testing should continue to be part of a modified Commitment to Community Health for those who are not vaccinated as well as for any student who may become symptomatic and test positive for SARS-CoV-2 (including those who may already have been vaccinated).

The Task Force recommends the discontinuation of wastewater testing during the summer, due to the reduced occupancy of the campus during this time; The Task Force recommends reevaluating the need for wastewater testing ahead of the Fall semester, based on the vaccination status of the campus population and the levels of community transmission of SARS-CoV-2.

Contact Tracing

The Task Force recommends close adherence to Madison County and CDC guidance in the fall, especially as the guidance is likely to become more nuanced for vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals. Existing [CDC guidelines](#) allow for individuals identified as close contacts to be released from quarantine after day 7 and upon receipt of a negative diagnostic test, or after day 10 with no test (versus the current 14 day quarantine).

Athletics

At this time the Task Force does not have any specific recommendations related to athletics practice or competition. The current testing regimen in place within the Patriot League, ECAC, and governed by the NCAA is likely to change by August 2021, and new guidance will inevitably emerge related to vaccinations.

Summer Research & OUS Summer Institute

The Task Force understands that the Emergency Operations Center is already working to support the OUS Summer Institute, which we also support. In addition, the Task Force recommends that Colgate welcome summer research students and Upstate Institute fellows to perform their work, if the work can be conducted in the United States. Students who will be living on campus over the summer should be vaccinated in order to facilitate their work within the laboratory or with others in the region. Ideally, Colgate should facilitate these vaccinations before the end of the Spring semester for students on campus so that students can leave at the conclusion of the semester and return without the need for a quarantine or experience other travel restrictions.

We recommend that students who are currently remote, and the OUS Summer Institute Scholars, are vaccinated prior to returning to campus, if possible, or receive vaccinations upon arrival to campus and then adhere to a period of restricted movement until their vaccination becomes effective.

Travel Restrictions & Quarantine Considerations

Although New York State is discontinuing the requirement for quarantine following entry into the state, there may still be travel restrictions in place in the fall, particularly for non-vaccinated individuals. Given the success in limiting SARS-CoV-2 entry into the community through the use of a universal quarantine for individuals who may be capable of transmitting the virus, Colgate may still require a quarantine or other public health restrictions upon arrival, especially for those who are not vaccinated. The Emergency Operations Center is currently working on digital health passport technology that may be utilized to restrict the activity of non-vaccinated individuals for a period of time. Alternatively, and if possible, these students could return early to campus for a testing regime that allows us to identify and isolate any SARS-CoV-2 prior to the start of the semester. The Task Force asks that attention be given to ensure that non-vaccinated students should not have to reveal private health conditions or religious

exemptions. Therefore, **we recommend that guidance on travel restrictions will be made closer to the start of the fall semester.**

Commitment to Community Health (CCH)

The Task Force recommends maintaining a commitment to public health required of all faculty, staff, and students, though in a largely modified form from the current CCH. The contents of this commitment will be finalized ahead of the fall semester, and could include language regarding face coverings, surveillance testing, compliance with isolation or quarantine, and, if necessary, any travel restrictions for vaccinated or unvaccinated members of the Colgate community.

Shared Governance

As per the Faculty Handbook, II, B. 5, President Casey created the Task Force on Reopening the Colgate Campus to guide the University in its eventual and safe reopening. The Task Force was charged with the following:

- After considering all national and local public health guidance, the conditions of the campus and village, and any other salient information, to develop guidelines regarding the timing of and conditions for the eventual, safe reopening of the Colgate University campus.
- To develop a schedule of decision dates in the 2020-21 Academic Year, in coordination with the EOC and any other relevant campus bodies, regarding the announcements of and implementations for any such reopening.
- At each decision date and as plans develop, as necessary, to offer the President recommendations regarding the re-opening of the campus, in whole or in part, and the steps necessary to ensure the safety of the community at such time.

The Task Force was formed in the spring of 2020. Throughout these past 11 months, Task Force members have regularly consulted with shared governance committees, hosted Town Halls and weekly “office hours.” The Task Force has issued reports and memos to the President and provided regular updates to the Colgate University campus community. President Casey shared our recommendations with the Committee on Faculty Affairs and the Board of Trustees before announcing those decisions to the community. Task Force members have answered hundreds of questions from the community and continued meeting weekly with the Health Analytics Team.

We have given our best to help steward the University through the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years. As we now look ahead to the fall semester and recommend a return to a fully residential, fully in-person classroom experience for the 2021-2022 academic year, **our final recommendation is to dismantle the Task Force on Reopening the Colgate Campus by the end of May 2021 and to begin to shift the work fully back to the shared governance structures and the University's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).**

We have been humbled by our work and conclude it with every confidence that we remained true to [our guiding principles](#) and with an awareness that we were working to keep Colgate Together.

Appendix I

Summary of Recommendations | Summer & Fall 2021

1. The Task Force recommends that the default planning model should be fully residential, with full in-person classes, though with the expectation that the University may need to adjust as needed to public health conditions.
2. We recommend adhering to the academic calendar for the 2021-2022 academic year, that was previously approved by the Academic Affairs Board, with no modifications to arrival dates, breaks or recesses, or campus departures.
3. The Task Force recommends retaining the use of the Wendt University Inn for the 2021 fall semester.
4. The Task Force recommends following the Madison County and CDC guidelines for masking and physical distancing that are in place closer to the start of the 2021 Fall semester
5. The Task Force recommends planning for a vaccine clinic during the summer for all faculty and staff members who have been unable to secure a vaccine on their own within the state.
6. The Task Force recommends inviting international students who were unable to receive vaccines in their home countries back to campus early.
7. The Task Force recommends planning should commence, once more is known, about the possibility of a clinic for vaccine boosters this fall just as the University does annually for the influenza vaccine.
8. At this time, the Task Force does not recommend requiring COVID-19 vaccines for any campus community member (students, staff and faculty).
9. The Task Force recommends requiring those who have indicated they have been vaccinated to show documentation to substantiate their inoculation.
10. The Task Force recommends surveillance testing for those individuals who remain unvaccinated in order to reduce the chance of asymptomatic non-vaccinated individuals from infecting others with SARS-CoV-2.
11. Compliance with surveillance testing should continue to be part of a modified Commitment to Community Health for those who are not vaccinated as well as for any student who may become symptomatic and test positive for SARS-CoV-2 (including those who may already have been vaccinated).
12. The Task Force recommends the discontinuation of wastewater testing during the summer months; however, we recommend reevaluating the practice of weekly testing ahead of the fall semester as a potential means for early detection of the virus within the community.

13. The Task Force recommends close adherence to Madison County and CDC guidance in the fall, especially as the guidance is likely to become more nuanced for vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals.
14. At this time, the Task Force does not have any specific recommendations related to athletics practice or competition.
15. The Task Force recommends that guidance on travel restrictions will be made closer to the start of the fall semester.
16. The Task Force recommends maintaining a commitment to public health required of all faculty, staff, and students, though in a largely modified form from the current Commitment to Community Health.
17. The Task Force's final recommendation is to dismantle the Task Force on Reopening the Colgate Campus by the end of May 2021 and to begin to shift the work fully back to the shared governance structures and the University's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).