Dear Faculty and Staff,

I’m writing today with an important announcement — we have decided to move the start date for our return to in-person work back by two weeks, from August 2 to August 16, in response to requests for additional time to prepare to come back to campuses and offices.

The decision to delay our return to campuses and offices grew also from our commitment to the protocols for health and safety walkthroughs that we developed in consultation with labor leadership. As you know, part of the preparation for our return to in-person work and instruction includes conducting campus health and safety walkthroughs with your labor representatives. We want to allow adequate time for the scheduling and administration of these walkthroughs.

Campus leaders and managers will retain the flexibility to determine that some employees need to start coming in before August 16 in order to be ready for classes to begin on August 25.

**Vaccination and Testing**

The modified calendar will also afford needed time to institute a University-wide systematic testing protocol. As we have known for many months, vaccination is the key to our safe return to campuses and offices because the highly effective COVID vaccines are without doubt the best way to prevent transmission of the virus. I am pleased that our last survey a month ago found that 87 percent of CUNY faculty and at least 70 percent of staff have been vaccinated, and I urge those who have not yet been vaccinated to do so. As a reminder, employees get up to four hours of paid time off to receive each required dose.

To protect the safety of unvaccinated faculty, staff and students as well as those who choose not to disclose their vaccination status, these individuals will be required to be tested. Details of the testing protocols and procedures are forthcoming. Unless things change, employees will not need to be routinely tested if they voluntarily provide vaccine information and supporting documentation in CUNYfirst. Starting August 16, anyone entering a CUNY facility will need to be fully vaccinated (two weeks beyond the last vaccination shot) or have a negative COVID-19 test taken within the past seven days.
Vaccination Verification

All employees can start uploading their information today by signing in to CUNYfirst and clicking on the Vaccine Verification link. To complete your vaccination information, you will need the date of your second shot for Pfizer and Moderna or the date of your single shot for Johnson & Johnson; a scan or photograph of your CDC COVID-19 vaccination record card (or an equivalent document if you received your vaccination outside the U.S.), and, if you have the NY State Excelsior Pass app, a scan or photograph of your pass on your mobile device. We are working with NYS Excelsior to link the pass to CUNY for validation purposes.

Please note that employees returning the week of August 16 will need to upload their vaccination verification documents by Friday, August 6, showing they will be fully vaccinated by the 16th. For those starting later than August 16, the deadlines for uploading are 10 days before the first week you are due back. For instance, if you are starting the week of August 23, the deadline is August 13. These voluntary submissions will facilitate your access to a campus or office in August and throughout the fall semester.

If you are not fully vaccinated or do not wish to disclose your status, you will be able to opt out of testing if you have an approved request for a fully remote accommodation. Approved or pending requests need to be indicated on the Vaccine Information Page in CUNYfirst and will be verified by campus Human Resources offices after they are submitted.

For a visual guide to submitting information to CUNYfirst, please visit here. For general information on getting back to working in person, please refer to this FAQ. If you still have questions, please consult your HR office. If you have a technical problem, please contact your campus or office help desk for assistance. All CUNY employees — vaccinated, unvaccinated or undisclosed — are required to follow the University’s Guidelines for CUNY Fall 2021 Reopening Where Not Everyone is Fully Vaccinated.

Finally, please note that the symptom tracker feature of Everbridge will no longer be in use after the return to workplaces on August 16. We will transition to a new feature in Everbridge that will display a CUNY VAX pass for those who have verified their vaccination information in CUNYfirst.

CUNY and campus leaders throughout the University are continuing to work hard to facilitate a safe and smooth return for all our students, faculty and staff. I reiterate our ironclad commitment to protecting the health of all members of our community in a climate that continues to be fluid and rapidly changeable. We look forward to welcoming everyone back in the next month; until then, please continue to stay safe.

Sincerely,

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