

Dear CSCU Community,

First and foremost, I want to thank all of you for helping to make this a safe and exciting fall semester at our 17 institutions. It is wonderful to have students, faculty, staff and administrators on campus and actively engaged in all that keeps our higher education system moving forward. Through the hard work of our campus leadership, particularly our COVID Coordinators, we have been able to return to full operations this fall. As I have had the opportunity to visit campuses, it is clear that everyone is getting more comfortable with our “new normal”.

As you know, the Board of Regents passed a mandate this fall to require students to attest to their coronavirus vaccination status and, if not vaccinated, to participate in regular testing to mitigate the spread of the virus. We have been rolling out the implementation of this policy this fall semester along with masking and physical distancing requirements, testing for the first time on the college campuses and continued testing at the universities, quarantine and isolation space for residential students who are contacts or infected, “Trusted Messenger” training in collaboration with Department of Public Health (DPH) and Yale for interested employees and students on helping to correct vaccine misinformation, and regular interactions with DPH officials to get information and ask questions related to our campus experiences.

Across CSCU (excluding Charter Oak State College), of our students who have attested to their vaccination status, 80% report being fully or partially vaccinated. This is great news and matches the state’s high overall vaccination rate—many thanks to those who have attested and gotten vaccinated! Along with masking and physical distancing in our classrooms and campus buildings, we have been able to keep the rate and spread of the virus to a minimum. That said, we want to continue to improve the number of students who are vaccinated and in compliance with our attestation and testing requirements. This remains a work in progress, but we are getting there steadily. With minor changes for the spring semester, we believe we will get into an even better position to keep the campuses safe and thriving.

For this spring, we are moving to Phase 2 in our implementation. Our overall goals are to 1) decrease the number of students who have not attested to their vaccination status, 2) to decrease the number of non-medical exemptions wherever possible, and 3) to continue to impose consequences for non-compliance. This continuous improvement will take place at the campus level allowing flexibility to address concerns based on local conditions. Each campus leadership team will:

1. Review and work to reduce the non-medical exemptions provided to students. Campuses are provided with flexibility on how this is done based on factors such as the size of the student population not yet vaccinated or level of non-compliance.
2. Continue to impose consequences for non-compliance for those students that have not attested to their vaccination status or have been granted exemptions but have not consistently reported for weekly testing.

I am working with the campus leadership teams now to develop vaccine plans for the summer and fall of 2022. Stay tuned as we continue to improve our processes going forward. Again, thank you for your diligence and dedication as we continue to address the impact of this pandemic on our campuses and, most importantly our students.

I strongly encourage you to stay vigilant with the cold weather ahead and increased congregating. We all need to focus on compliance if we are to maintain low positivity rates on campus, in the community and at home. If you have questions, please reach out to covid-19@ct.edu

Terrence Cheng
President, CSCU