January 11, 2022

Subject: Preparing for our Spring Launch

Dear Colleagues:

We are very close to the launch of the spring semester next week. This will mark the second semester fully back to our roots as a residential university since COVID-19 began. While we are still dealing with the unpredictable nature of this pandemic, we have learned a lot and are well-prepared to continue to address the many challenges as they arise. I want to thank you for your continued resolve, dedication, and hard work needed to bring us to this point in the pandemic. That is who we are as a Ram community.

We are committed to providing our students with the best educational experiences possible, including strong academic and co-curricular experiences that include significant in-person engagement, as we also balance health requirements. In the past two years, our students and employees have dealt with so much social isolation, unstructured lifestyles, and other challenges and loss that have contributed to the exceedingly high mental health and other emotional challenges.

We are now balancing more factors than ever as we make the best decisions for our campus heading into this next semester. Our students are very thankful and appreciative. They continue to ask for the in-person opportunities that we are providing for them. We desire to preserve as much of this experience as possible.

Start of Spring Semester, Tuesday January 18

We are continuing to plan for the start of Spring Semester on Tuesday, January 18, with as many in-person experiences and classes as possible. Our decision to continue in-person classes was guided by the science and made after careful consultation and collaboration with all our experts, including our Pandemic Preparedness Team (PPT), Larimer County Public Health Director, campus scientific experts, and national public health data. We will continue to consult daily with our PPT, Larimer County Public Health experts, and other experts to adjust and adapt to our changing environment as needed.

CSU has very successfully managed to slow the spread and outbreaks of COVID on our campuses from March 2020 through the Fall 2021. We have been able to mitigate widespread disruption and are aware of no classroom-connected outbreaks in the fall as we followed public health guidelines including mask and vaccination requirements, and bi-weekly screening mandates for those unvaccinated.

We will continue to focus on health protocols, with vaccines mandates and booster requirements, vaccine clinics, continued masking requirements, and COVID screening when returning to campus. We will continue to support appropriate testing requirements, and quarantine and isolation plans for our residential students.

We have learned a great deal these past two years about the virus and its variants, and we already know a great deal about the Omicron variant. It is more transmissible than Delta, but also appears to be less
virulent, leading to fewer cases of severe illness especially among those who are fully vaccinated and boosted. Thus far, vaccination has provided protection against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. This is why President McConnell has required booster shots that can strengthen the immune system and provide additional protection for our campus.

We will be providing colleges and departments with guidelines later this week for how to provide support and flexibility for faculty members dealing with multiple scenarios in the classroom including: amount of COVID cases resulting in absenteeism, if faculty test positive or they are in quarantine due to a positive close contact, and other situations. We are considering what additional support we may need for faculty and students to address all these scenarios. I ask for your patience and understanding as we continue to work with the College Deans and other units to identify many of these potential issues and the needed backup resources to put in place to support you and our students.

In the meantime, I encourage you to attend tomorrow’s CSU Community COVID Information Session. Interested employees can register and access the session via Zoom. The session will be live-captioned and have live ASL interpretation. It also will be recorded and later posted on CSU’s COVID information website.

A New Turn in a Long Journey

We have been on quite a journey with this pandemic, individually and as a community. We have more challenges ahead and this is just the latest turn among many, but we are learning more each day about how to mitigate COVID’s disruption to our health and ways of life. I am grateful for everything you have done to support this institution, your colleagues, and our students, and for all you have endured to keep CSU moving forward. What you do at every level of this university contributes to our mission and that contributes to a better world.

Sincerely,

Mary Pedersen
Provost and Executive Vice President

Please note: The Pandemic Preparedness Team continues to update Spring 2022 FAQs. Please reference them for general questions about the semester: https://covid.colostate.edu/kb/spring-2022-frequently-asked-questions/.