Safe Return to Campus, Fall 2021

Working Group Report
February 22, 2021

Introduction
As President McBride noted in his welcome message at the start of the semester, “We are beginning to look toward the fall with cautious optimism and focusing on the questions, needs, and challenges to address as we prepare to reopen our New York City campus.” That note of cautious optimism is shared across the university leadership and all parts of our community.

The Executive Vice President for Business and Operations called on the expertise of colleagues across the university to form a Working Group to identify the questions and topics to address in order to safely return to campus in Fall, and to identify the appropriate offices or groups charged with addressing those issues. These considerations are driven first and foremost by the academic planning that is being led by the Provost.

This report shares the full range of operational considerations identified by the Working Group. A preliminary draft report was shared with the Faculty, Staff, and Student Senates, and other university colleagues. Their feedback was helpful to shape this updated version. With this report, the Working Group has met its charge. The work will continue as individual leadership bodies, offices, and departments focus on the issues, questions, and concerns under their purview.

Understandably, there is a great deal of eagerness in our community to know as much as possible, as early as possible, about the fall, and we are committed to timely decision-making and communication. Our progress will be determined by the trajectory of the pandemic, the pace of the vaccination program, and the best available public health guidance, all of which are developing in real-time. And we intend not simply to return to campus, but to make the experience of our campus even better.
Guiding Principles
Planning for a return to campus will continue to be guided by the core principles that informed the university’s ongoing COVID-19 response:

- **Protecting the health and safety of the entire New School community** — students, faculty, and staff — and the neighbors with whom we interact.
- **Maintaining the highest-quality teaching, learning, research, and cultural expression** in every college, department, and specialty.
- **Ensuring equitable access** to classes and other learning activities for all students, and to the resources necessary to teach and work.

Planning Assumptions
Our planning is also guided by assumptions about the preparedness and capacity of our university community. These assumptions are informed by feedback from students, faculty, and staff on their experiences this past year. They are also shaped by ongoing communication with public health experts, higher education colleagues, and government agencies.

Teaching and Learning
- Students want to return to campus and have the benefits of an in-person experience.
- Remote learning continues to be an option for some courses and programs.
- Students, faculty, and staff can successfully adapt to evolving guidelines impacting academic activities.

Campus
- Campus space will be prioritized for learning, teaching, research, and academic activities.
- Facilities will be updated and maintained to be safe and appropriate for use.

Health and Safety
- Infection and transmission rates will be significantly lower than they are at the time of this report, and will continue to decline.
- Regular and accessible testing, use of masks, and hygiene practices will continue.
- A significant portion of our community will be vaccinated by the start of the semester.
- Revised social distancing and density guidelines will allow for increased in-person capacity and activity.
Planning Timeline
Our timeline for decision-making and communication for Fall 2021 is driven by the academic planning calendar, including key dates for admission, registration, housing, course scheduling, and part-time faculty teaching assignments.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>March 1</td>
<td>Course schedules for Summer and Fall due from colleges to Provost</td>
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<td>April 1</td>
<td>Housing applications and deposits due for continuing students</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 5</td>
<td>Registration begins for Summer and Fall</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 5 (changed from March 29)</td>
<td>Registration begins for Summer and Fall</td>
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<td>April 15</td>
<td>Admission deposits due for Parsons, NSSR and SPE graduate programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Admission deposits due for general new students</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 14</td>
<td>Housing applications and deposits due for new students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks of May 1</td>
<td>Part-time faculty appointment letters generated for Summer and Fall</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Summer) and June 1</td>
<td>(Fall)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tentative</td>
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Additional Academic Planning milestones include:

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>Preliminary review of teaching and learning plans for possible adaptations including the need for additional online offerings to support students who may not be able to attend in person.</td>
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<td>June 1</td>
<td>Reevaluate academic plan for fall in light of any new or significant developments and make any necessary modifications.</td>
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<td>July 15</td>
<td>Details regarding protocols (e.g., testing, masks, etc.) for on-campus teaching, learning, and events will be finalized.</td>
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Recommendation: Ongoing COVID Coordination Group
Moving forward, the Working Group recommends the creation of an ongoing, centralized, clear, and coordinated body to gauge and share progress, understand emerging concerns and issues, and make appropriate updates and recommendations regarding a safe return to campus. Given the timeline for announcing details of Fall 2021 plans, this group should be formed in March. It should include university leaders in dedicated roles to steer this work and draw upon expertise from across the university. Its areas of oversight should include:

- Establishing a timeline and process to address issues and share progress
- Determining relevant metrics and ensuring transparency via an accessible dashboard.
- Ensuring that there is active monitoring of guidance and information sharing from local, state, and federal agencies, public health experts, and peer institutions.
- Determining guidelines for access to campus spaces by guests and visitors.
- Ensuring that there are opportunities for community feedback and accountability, including clear contacts for questions and concerns and regular touchpoints with University Student, Faculty, and Staff Senates.
- Ensuring that equity, inclusion, and accessibility are key considerations guiding all COVID-response decisions, policies, and planning.
- Providing high-level coordination with new and existing university planning offices and groups focused on COVID response and the safe return to campus, including the Provost’s Office, University Space Planning, Student Success, etc.

Focus Areas to be Addressed
As we look toward reopening campus, there are many details to be managed to integrate what we have learned from the pandemic while continuing to prioritize community health and safety. Our planning must address the particular needs and concerns of students, faculty, staff, academic programs, campus facilities, and the overall health and safety measures.

The Working Group organized into teams to focus on six major categories: Students, Employees, Academic Planning, Campus Space, Health and Safety, and Communication. The section below summarizes the issues identified by each team. Additionally, the Working Group identified the responsible university offices, groups, or bodies with the expertise and authority to address each issue.

Below are summaries of issues identified and the University teams identified for managing them in red. We will also share more detailed feedback and suggestions with these groups documented by the Working Group.
Academic Planning

Ensuring the primacy of a vital learning experience for students

Academic Planning is well underway for Fall 2021, driven by the timeline shared above regarding course scheduling and registration. That planning process is aimed at resolving these and many other details:

Responsibility: Academic Affairs & Planning (Provost’s Office) with support from University Space Planning

- Determine and share plan for teaching and learning to be on campus in the fall.
- Ensure that plans are in place to adjust to remote learning if needed.
- Determine implications for section sizes.
- Determine and resolve issues for particular programs or courses.
- Determine whether changes are needed for student attendance policies.
- Make determinations about any adjustments to the academic calendar.

Students

Meeting our promise to provide a rigorous, distinctive, positive student experience in the context of the ongoing pandemic.

Responsibility: Student Success

- Establish ways to help address significant or new financial needs students may have related to COVID.
- Establish ways to meet student needs for advising, medical or mental health support stemming from the pandemic.
- Understand and support the particular needs international students might have related to travel restrictions, visa obligations, quarantine requirements, etc.
- Determine policy and process for considering accommodations for students unable to learn in-person.
- Determine adjustments needed for housing and dining services.
- Ensure that we are creating robust and meaningful orientation, extracurricular, and community-building experiences consistent with capacity and distancing guidelines.
Employees
Ensuring that our faculty and staff have the services and support they need to work productively and safely in the context of the ongoing pandemic.

Responsibility: President’s Leadership Team
- Determine categories of employees who will be required to work on-campus and those for whom remote work will continue.

Responsibility: Information Technology
- Establish or revise policies and services to ensure that remote workers have the equipment and technology they need.

Responsibility: Human Resources
- Develop policies, practices, and training to ensure that or those areas and employees that continue to work on-campus and remotely have effective supervisory and peer relationships, employee development, team-building, mental health support, and a sense of culture and community.
- Determine any policy adjustments or flexibility related to COVID-related absence (e.g., sick leave, childcare or parent care, etc.).
- Determine provisions and requirements for faculty and staff testing and vaccinations. (see also: Health and Safety category)
- Determine policy and process for considering accommodations for employees unable to work in-person.

Campus Space
Ensuring that our campus facilities are well designed and equipped to respond to the changing context of the pandemic

Responsibility: University Space Planning
- Determine facilities changes needed to meet capacity and density guidelines (open hours, ventilation, HVAC, elevators, room sizes, entries, and exits).
- Ensure university systems and requirements for reservations and access are appropriately integrated and updated for COVID practices (e.g., testing, symptom tracking).
- Determine physical changes needed for classrooms, libraries, study spaces, practice and rehearsal spaces, studios, and making spaces.
- Determine physical changes needed for housing and dining services.
- Determine physical changes needed for open gathering and event spaces.
- Determine physical changes needed for **office and administrative work spaces**, including **office assignments, design, and environment changes** for faculty and staff working on campus.

### Health and Safety

*Doing as much as possible to operate by best practices and current public health guidance to promote overall community health and safety*

**Responsibility: COVID Coordination Group**

- Set and communicate university policies, requirements, and support for **vaccinations, testing, symptom screening, quarantine, and isolation** and other health and safety practices.
- Determine requirements regarding the wearing of **face masks** in campus facilities.
- Ensure the university can **flexibly shift plans** based on updated guidance.
- Determine whether and how the university will **provide appropriate masks, tests, and other personal protective materials** if recommended or required.

### Communication

*Ensuring that there is regular, accessible, clear, and comprehensive communication related to the pandemic and its impact on our university*

**Responsibility: COVID Communications Group (to be formed)**

- Ensure **regular, rapid, and relevant COVID-related communication**.
- Determine **primary sources and appropriate channels** of information and plans for rapidly updating and disseminating information to students, families, faculty, and staff.
- Develop protocols to better **synchronize communication** between central and high-level information and more localized and program-specific communication.
- Guide development of **dashboard** to provide transparent, real-time updates on significant data and metrics.
APPENDIX

Safe Return to Campus Working Group Members

Chair
Tokumbo Shobowale, Executive Vice President for Business and Operations

Academic Leadership and Faculty
Nadine Bourgeois, Parsons School of Design
Francesca Fiore, Schools of Public Engagement
Teresa Ghilarducci, New School for Social Research
Richard Kessler, College of Performing Arts
Vlad Nikolic, School of Media Studies, Schools of Public Engagement

Student Senate Representatives
Weiouqing Chen, New School for Social Research and Chair, University Student Senate
Noor Lima Boudakian, Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts and Director of Staff, University Student Senate

Faculty Senate Representative
Craig Bernecker, Parsons School of Design and Co-chair, University Faculty Senate

Staff Senate Representative
Maria Elena Grant, Marketing and Communications and Co-chair, New School Staff Senate

Student Success Team
Zach Harrell, Student Housing
Jayne Jordan-Levy, Student Health Services
AJ Lutz, Student Housing
Gale Lynch, Global Engagement and International Support Services
Xenia Markowitt, Student Success
Shondrika Merritt, Student Conduct and Advocacy

Provost Office
Jed Crocker, Academic Planning
Jin Kim, Academic Planning
Jane McNamara, Strategy

Administration and Operations Areas
Deborah Bogosian, Office of the President
Chris Brezil, Information Technology
Jo Goldberger, Buildings
Marcus Longmuir, Information Technology
Steven Melzer, Strategic Initiatives
Laura Montgomery, Marketing and Communication
Jean Oei, Space Planning
Sarah Sim, Continuing and Professional Education
Erin Stine, Strategic Enrollment Management
Keila Tennent, Labor Relations
Thomas Whalen, Facilities Management
Junea Williams-Edmund, General Counsel
Andrea Yenco-Cabatotan, Human Resources

Additional Feedback Groups
University Student Senate
University Staff Senate
Parsons School of Design Deans’ Council
Provost Office, Deans, Associate and Vice Deans

Working Group Timeline

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week of January 4</td>
<td>Design Working Group goals, structure, and timeline</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 12</td>
<td>Working Group Kickoff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week of January 18</td>
<td>Group formation, initial category, and topic summary</td>
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<td>January 27</td>
<td>Working Group Meeting - Facilitated Focus Areas</td>
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<td>February 4</td>
<td>Preliminary report shared with Senates and PLT for feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 9</td>
<td>Working Group meeting - Facilitated Focus Areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 22</td>
<td>Working Group Report to Senates and President’s Leadership Team</td>
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