



August 16, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your incredible efforts over the past year to advance our academic mission and sustain our campus community health and well-being. It is wonderful to see students arriving to campus for first-year orientation and for the beginning of our academic year. As we all look forward to restoring the in-person classroom experiences that are so important to our students and each other, we are also continuing to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. This letter addresses two key components of the classroom environment and provides a more detailed set of [guidelines for the fall semester](#).

Vaccination Status and the Classroom Experience

At this time, 95.1% of students have reported their vaccine status and 92.8% of those students are vaccinated. Understandably, faculty have expressed interest in knowing if everyone in their class is fully vaccinated or not. We recognize this information may affect an instructor's choice to wear a mask and whether to require everyone in the class to wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status.

Although the University will continue to report the rates of vaccination and numbers of active cases and positive tests in our campus community, it is critical that each individual's privacy be respected and maintained. The current requirement that employees and students upload their vaccination status is accompanied by an assurance that the University will keep this personal medical information confidential.

Accordingly, faculty and staff may not ask students to disclose their vaccination status, even by means such as anonymous polling. We encourage instructors to foster community standards in the classroom that protect an individual's privacy, just as you would for other issues of a personal nature. Similarly, faculty and staff may consider their vaccine status as a personal matter. Disclosure is the prerogative of the individual.

It is also important to avoid making assumptions about why an individual in our community may be unvaccinated or wearing a mask. There are a number of medical conditions or other reasons that prevent some from becoming vaccinated. Likewise, there are a number of reasons, including underlying health conditions and concern for personal health that may influence decisions about wearing a mask. As our community works to regain the in-person classroom experiences that define a Richmond education, we seek to strengthen as a place that welcomes all and is attentive to personal privacy.

Once the University completes the add/drop process, we will be able to offer information about whether a particular class is fully vaccinated or not. If the answer is that the class is not fully

vaccinated, no quantitative data will be provided, and no individuals will be identified out of respect for individual confidentiality. In order to protect individual privacy, information about whether the class is fully vaccinated or not will not be reported for any courses with fewer than five enrolled students.

Collecting Data for Contact Tracing

The prevalence of highly transmissible variants of COVID-19 requires that we collect data about classroom seating arrangements. If a student or instructor tests positive, we must be able to quickly identify individuals who have been potentially exposed and initiate further action. As students will be seated three feet from each other, seating charts will be far more important this year. As a result, all instructors from all five schools and divisions are expected to record and upload seating arrangements for all in-person classes. We have simplified the steps so that critical information for contact tracing is readily available, spatial arrangements needed to accommodate the instructor's pedagogy can still be achieved, and the burden on the instructor to collect data is as low as possible. Please see the [detailed instructions](#) on how to file your seating chart no later than Sept. 6.

We hope you will read the [Classroom Guidelines for Fall 2021](#) closely. Please know that the University will continue to review and adapt these guidelines as appropriate for changing conditions.

Thank you for all your preparations for the new academic year and best wishes for the fall semester.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey W. Legro

Executive Vice President and Provost