



January 11, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

We write to you at the outset of the spring 2022 semester to provide more information regarding a limited opportunity for remote teaching or work for specific categories of staff and faculty and to encourage you to save the date for a staff and faculty town hall this Thursday, Jan. 13, from 4–5 p.m. related to our COVID-19 response and planning.

With the significant increase in COVID-19 cases as a result of the Omicron variant, we understand and appreciate that this is an unsettling time for many. Nevertheless, and thankfully, we begin the semester poised for a productive term, and in a much better situation than prior periods of this pandemic. The following factors make our in-person education both feasible and desirable at this time:

- Our campus community remains highly vaccinated and boosters are readily available locally.
- Emerging data indicates that the Omicron variant is relatively mild in most vaccinated people — typically no more than short-term cold and flu symptoms. Additionally, most members of our campus community experienced only mild to moderate illness with the Delta variant.
- We have seen no evidence of classroom transmission at any time during the pandemic.
- We continue to require masks in buildings, and we are encouraging and making readily available and free to our community higher quality masks, including KN95 and surgical masks.
- We are maintaining interventions that promote healthy buildings, including increased outside airflow, bi-polar ionizers, UVC filters, and rigorous cleaning and disinfection protocols.
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Many have pointed to the importance of in-person learning for student well-being and the negative consequences experienced by students who feel isolated. The delivery of an engaging in-person experience balanced with COVID-19 mitigation protocols is challenging but feasible and is clearly beneficial for the pursuit of our educational mission and commitment to our students.

We understand that some in our community who are at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 are particularly concerned given the current trajectory of COVID-19 cases. As a result, we are providing an opportunity for staff and faculty who fall into the categories listed below, and whose position responsibilities permit, to request to work remotely until Jan. 31.

The categories of faculty and staff who may request such an arrangement include:

- Faculty and staff who have a medical condition that puts them at high risk for serious illness from COVID-19.
- Faculty and staff who live with someone who has a medical condition that puts them at high risk for serious illness from COVID-19.
- Faculty and staff living with children under age 5.

We recognize that many people in these categories have continued to teach and work on-campus throughout the different stages of the pandemic and may continue to do so now.

Staff and faculty in these categories whose responsibilities may be performed remotely for a limited period of time may request to work remotely until Jan. 31 using this [form](#). The request form also allows for us to understand where help may be needed to sustain our in-person work and support those who continue to work fully in person.

Additional information about resources for employees is available [here](#).

We look forward to sharing information and addressing questions from community members as it relates to the University's COVID-19 response and planning when we host a staff and faculty town hall, which will be recorded, on Thursday. You will soon receive an invitation to the town hall as well as details about how to submit questions in advance.

We are closely monitoring prevailing data and public health guidance, and we will continue to adjust our plans, as needed. We thank you for your support and understanding as we all work together to maintain the health and well-being of our community while also working to provide the highest quality educational experience for our students.

Sincerely,

**David Hale**

Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

**Jeffrey Legro**

Executive Vice President and Provost

**Shannon Sinclair**

Vice President and General Counsel, Chair, Resilience Working Group