INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

When you have read this document, you can affirm at the bottom.

As of June 20, 2020

Purpose

This Interim Guidance for Higher Education during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency ("Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Higher Education") was created to provide colleges, universities and other higher education institutions, and their employees, students, visitors, contractors, and vendors with precautions to help protect against the spread of COVID-19.

This guidance is intended to address all types of in-person higher education institutions, including but not limited to community and junior colleges, universities, graduate and professional schools, medical schools, and technical schools. In addition to affirming to understand and meet the requirements described herein, higher education institutions must develop a plan for reopening and operating for the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency. Plans should reflect engagement with campus stakeholders, including but not limited to administrators, faculty, staff, students and, where appropriate, affiliated organizations (e.g., union, alumni, and/or community-based groups). Specifically, each institution must develop and submit a plan that, at a minimum, covers:

(1) Reopening of the campus,

(2) Monitoring of health conditions,

(3) Containment of potential transmission of the virus, and

(4) Shut down of in-person operations on the campus, if necessitated by widespread COVID-19 transmission.

Reopening includes plans for restarting campus operations including student, faculty, and staff return. The following considerations must be included, at a minimum:

- **Capacity:** Phasing and quantity of students, faculty and staff to return to campus, considering factors such as ability to maintain social distance in public spaces and residence halls, testing capabilities, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) availability, quarantine and isolation capacity, local medical capacity, and availability of safe transportation;

- **PPE:** Develop plans for obtaining and providing acceptable face coverings to all employees of the institution. Determine if the institution will be providing face coverings or other PPE to students. Develop requirements about what PPE is required where and when for employees, students, and other individuals on campus, in accordance with state and local public health laws, regulations, and policies;

- **Testing:** Plan for screening and diagnostic testing students and faculty for SARS-CoV-2 upon return, especially any individuals with recent international or long-distance travel, particularly from areas with widespread community transmission of the virus. Plans should indicate if individuals will be tested, who will be tested, the frequency of testing, the method of testing, notification of test results, and the process for those arriving to campus untested. Plans may determine whether to quarantine students upon arrival until they receive testing and a negative test result;

- **Residential living:** Residential living plans should include protocols for capacity limits, enhanced cleaning and disinfection, appropriate social distancing, use of acceptable face coverings in common areas, restrictions on non-essential gatherings and activities, limited access by students to other residential facilities (e.g. dormitories), restrictions of visitors, special housing considerations for students who are immunocompromised or who have an underlying health condition, separate living spaces for persons undergoing isolation or quarantine, and a modified set of rules for students to follow;

- **Operational activity:** Determine how classes, shared spaces, and activities may be adapted in various phases of return and operations (e.g., identify which classes will offer alternate approaches such as A/B schedules or remote instruction; appointment-only use of shared spaces, limiting number of individuals participating in in-person activities at any given time);

- **Restart operations:** Implement plans to safely reopen buildings such as cleaning and disinfection, and restarting ventilation, water systems, and other key facility components, as applicable;

- **Extracurriculars:** Institute policies regarding extracurricular programs and which activities will be allowed, considering social distancing and risk of COVID-19 transmission;

- **Vulnerable Populations:** Consider vulnerable populations on campus and individuals who may not feel comfortable returning, to allow them to safely participate in educational activities and accommodate their specific circumstances; and

- **Hygiene, cleaning and disinfection:** Establish campus-wide cleaning and disinfection protocols for classrooms, residence halls, restrooms, dining halls and other facilities. Promote hand and respiratory hygiene among all individuals on campus.

Monitoring includes policies to track health conditions on campus. The following considerations must be included, at a minimum:

- **Testing responsibility:** Identify who is responsible for purchasing and administering testing, as well as notification of test results; plans should offer contingencies for continual screening of symptoms and temperature checks without testing, if needed.

- **Testing frequency and protocols:** Determine testing frequency and process which may include plans to test for cause (e.g. symptomatic individuals, close or proximate contacts, international travel), plans to test for surveillance to proactively monitor for symptoms of influenza-like illness, as well as protocols around group testing.

- **Early warning signs:** Define metrics that will serve as early warning signs that positive cases may be increasing beyond an acceptable level; define method(s) to monitor against such metrics;

- **Tracing:** Consider plans for contact tracing in close coordination with state and local health departments using the protocols, training, and tools provided through the New York State Contact Tracing Program – an initiative between the Department of Health, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Vital Strategies; and

- **Screening:** Develop plans for regular health screening of employees, students, and visitors.

Containment includes plans for how to respond to positive or suspected cases as well as preventative policies and practices. The following considerations must be included, at a minimum:

- **Isolation:** Identify how to isolate symptomatic individuals, both residential and non-residential (as applicable). Plans must specifically identify where individuals will be residing (e.g. residence halls, hotels, home) throughout the duration of their isolation, as well as the support system that will be provided including food, medicine, psychosocial, academic and/or other support, as needed;

- **Quarantine:** Identify how exposed individuals (residential and non-residential) will be quarantined away from others, including the support system that will be provided including food, medicine, psychosocial, academic and/or other support, as needed;

- **Students confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19:** Residential institutions need to include plans to monitor and provide medical care and other health services to students who test positive and are in isolation, need more advanced medical care, or who are awaiting test results;

- **Hygiene, cleaning and disinfection:** Implement strategies for cleaning and disinfection of exposed areas and appropriate notification to occupants of such areas; and

- **Communication:** Develop plans to share protocols and safety measures taken by the institution.

Shutdown includes contingency plans for decreasing on-campus activities and operations and/or closing the campus. The following considerations must be included, at a minimum:

- **Operational Activity:** Include which operations will be decreased, scaled back, ramped down, or shutdown and which operations will be conducted remotely; include process to conduct orderly shutdown which may include phasing, milestones, and involvement of key personnel.

- **Move-out:** For residential universities, plans need to be put in place for how students would safely depart campus. Institutions should consider policies for students who may not be able to depart campus quickly (e.g. international students); and

- **Communication:** Develop comprehensive plans to communicate internally and externally throughout the process.