

2021

COVID-19 campus update – August 19, 2021

Eastern Michigan University

Campus update – August 19, 2021: Overview of vaccination mandates, policies and initiatives

Thursday, August 19, 2021

To the Eastern Michigan University community,

We are 11 days and counting from the start of fall semester classes, and one week away from the start of move-in. To say we are excited to welcome everyone to campus is an understatement!

As we prepare for move-in, orientation for new students ([EMU Connect](#)), and the start of classes, we continue to update and adjust our policies and guidelines related to safety protocols concerning COVID-19. Our flexibility in making these adjustments has been critical in keeping our community as safe as possible throughout the pandemic. This is as important today as it was at the start of the pandemic, with the Delta variant taking hold and increasing transmission and hospitalizations, particularly among the unvaccinated.

I will update several of our actions, both new and ongoing, as we prepare for the fall semester:

- Mandatory vaccinations for students participating or working in intercollegiate athletics, marching band, cheer team, dance team, and for Athletics coaches
- Update on mandatory vaccinations/COVID-19 testing for students living in residence halls
- Schedule for pop-up vaccination clinics
- Update on “Get the VAX to WIN!” incentives
- COVID-19 testing center expanded hours
- Face mask requirements
- One-stop online resource for COVID-19 policies, guidelines and initiatives
- Looking ahead

Mandatory vaccinations for students participating or working in intercollegiate athletics, marching band, cheer team, dance team, and for Athletics coaches

Today, we announced a mandatory vaccination requirement for students participating or working in intercollegiate athletics, marching band, cheer team, dance team, and for Athletics coaches. Individuals in these groups were informed about this earlier today, along with the specific process and timing schedules they are required to follow.

The nature of the activities involved in these groups (including close contact, maskless activity, and/or travel) creates a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19, but that risk can be significantly reduced if individuals are vaccinated. That’s why many other universities in the Mid-American Conference, in the State of Michigan, and across the country, are also requiring students in similar programs to be vaccinated.

Fortunately, the COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective, and free. Unfortunately, COVID-19 continues to spread and evolve, and the nature of the activities identified above present a higher risk of exposure to this virus. This policy -- which is outlined in more detail below -- is designed to reflect these important distinctions.

The individuals who are covered by this policy must receive their first COVID-19 vaccination shot no later than Friday, September 3, 2021. Individuals who receive a two-shot vaccination series must receive their second shot and verify their vaccination status through the University's [COVID Vax Certification system](#) no later than Friday, September 24, 2021.

Students (including Graduate Student Assistants, student employees, and interns) who are covered by this policy and wish to request an accommodation from vaccination due to medical reasons or a sincerely-held religious belief may do so [here](#).

Athletic coaches who are covered by this policy and wish to request an accommodation from vaccination due to medical reasons or a sincerely-held religious belief should contact University Human Resources at hr_benefits@emich.edu.

Update on mandatory vaccinations/COVID-19 testing for students living in residence halls

As announced last week, all students who live in student housing facilities during the fall semester will be required to be vaccinated against COVID-19. The deadline for students who live in these facilities to receive their final vaccination shot and verify their vaccination status through the University's [COVID Vax Certification system](#) is Thursday, September 30, 2021. A person has received a final vaccination shot after receiving a second shot of a two-shot vaccination series (e.g., Pfizer or Moderna) or a single shot of a one-shot vaccination series (e.g., Johnson & Johnson vaccine).

As referenced previously, students who live in University housing and wish to request an accommodation from vaccination due to medical reasons or a sincerely held religious belief may do so [here](#).

All housing residents will be required to submit proof of a recent negative COVID-19 test shortly before move-in. This policy reflects the fact that some residents may not be fully vaccinated when they move into campus housing. Residential housing students have received instructions on how to submit this information. Those with questions may email housing@emich.edu.

The University has developed a [website](#) dedicated to this program.

Since the announcement last week, many residential students have submitted their vaccination status through our [VAX Certification](#) link. We thank them for being proactive in this process.

Schedule for pop-up vaccination clinics

As I indicated in several previous messages to campus, we have been working closely with the Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD) to schedule “pop-up” vaccination clinics on Eastern’s campus. Our initial efforts are focused on the start of the semester in order to provide an opportunity for those who are not vaccinated to receive at least a single dose prior to the start of classes, or shortly thereafter. The current schedule is as follows:

- Saturday, August 28: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Saturday, September 18: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Location: EMU Student Center Ballroom
- The J&J single dose vaccine and the Pfizer vaccine will be offered.
- A registration link will be established for scheduling appointments. Walk-ins will be accepted, but appointments are highly suggested.
- This clinic will be open to all campus students, faculty, staff and the community.
- Individuals needing the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine may come to either clinic.

We also are working with the State of Michigan to schedule additional pop-up vaccination clinics. Those details are being finalized and will be shared in future communications.

Update on “Get the VAX to WIN!” incentives

We are seeing considerable interest in our “Get the VAX to WIN” campaign to encourage vaccinations among students and employees. Announced one week ago, the program provides students and employees who receive the COVID-19 vaccination an opportunity to receive one of 150 prizes ranging from \$5,000 and \$1,000 credits on student accounts, one free semester of on-campus housing, free parking, \$100 bookstore gift cards, or \$500 payments.

The first group of prize winners will be selected on Monday, August 30 (first day of classes). Four additional announcements of winners will be made in the weeks that follow.

To be eligible, students and employees must submit their vaccination status through the [COVID Vax Certification system](#) by October 8. Complete details of prizes, rules and deadlines can be found on the [Get the VAX to WIN website](#).

COVID-19 testing center expanded hours

The University’s free COVID-19 testing will continue over the summer and into the fall. Testing is encouraged even for those who are fully vaccinated. While being vaccinated limits the symptoms of COVID-19, vaccinated individuals may still be carriers and inadvertently spread the virus to family and friends. The Testing Center

is located in the Student Center, next to the bookstore. The hours for the upcoming week and for the fall semester are below:

- Monday, August 23: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Wednesday, August 25: 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- Thursday, August 26: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. (special hours for move-in)
- Friday, August 27: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. (special hours for move-in)

Fall Semester schedule beginning Monday, August 30:

- Mondays 1 p.m. – 5 p.m.
- Wednesdays 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Thursdays 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Fridays 9 a.m. – noon

Visit the [Testing Center website](#) for details about the process.

Face mask requirements

As announced earlier this month, all members of the campus community (including all students, employees, and visitors) must wear a face mask while indoors, regardless of vaccination status, except in the following circumstances where indoor masking is not required:

- You are an instructor teaching in a classroom, you are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and you have verified your vaccination status on the University's [COVID Vax Certification system](#). Instructors teaching without a face mask should maintain six-foot physical distance if not behind plexiglass, and may remain unmasked during the class period only.
- You have a disability-based University accommodation regarding wearing a face mask (employees requesting an accommodation should contact hr_benefits@emich.edu and students requesting an accommodation should contact EMU_DeanOfStudents@emich.edu).
- You are alone in a private office, living space, or private motor vehicle with the door closed, or in another similarly isolated space.
- You are actively eating, drinking, or swimming.
- You are undergoing a physical exam of your mouth, nose, or throat by a medical professional.
- You are attending an event that has been approved for a special exemption. Requests to consider exemptions for events must be submitted to the Office of

Conference & Event Services (CES) at book_emu@emich.edu.

- Face masks are not required outdoors regardless of vaccination status.

Individual University employees and offices cannot waive the indoor face mask requirement -- including the mandate that face masks be worn by all students in classrooms -- without the approval of the President's Office. When necessary, instructors should reference and follow the [University's Guide to Classroom Management](#) in the event an individual in the classroom refuses to comply with the University's face mask policy. It is considered disruptive classroom behavior to refuse to comply as directed.

One-stop online resource for COVID-19 policies, guidelines and initiatives

We understand that the many policies, guidelines and initiatives we have in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 can be challenging to follow. As a reminder, we have a one-stop online resource where you can find up-to-date information about our policies, guidelines and initiatives. Please visit and bookmark the [EMU Safe website](#), and navigate the various links on the page. We will continue to update the site in the days and weeks ahead as developments warrant. We will attempt to add practicum, field experience, student teaching and other requirements for off campus engagement here as these details are provided to us.

Looking ahead

We hope the policies and guidelines we have in place are temporary, and that we see the overall rate of COVID-19 cases decline in the weeks ahead. The best way to return to a sense of normalcy is for people who qualify to actually receive the COVID-19 vaccine. It is one of the safest and most effective ways to minimize the spread and seriousness of COVID-19.

At the same time, it is important to note that COVID-19 and its variants continue to evolve, requiring new guidance and changes in response here at the University and among public health and government leaders everywhere. I know that it has been said repeatedly, but the only certainty about this disease is its uncertainty. I ask for your continued support and patience as we monitor and adjust our practices based on the health expertise provided by our faculty and staff experts on campus, and guidance from medical professionals in the county, state, and the nation.

Please stay safe and continue to monitor your email closely for further updates in the days and weeks ahead.

James Smith, Ph.D.