January 24th, 2022

Dear Highlander Community,

UC Riverside will resume in-person instruction on Monday, January 31. A small number of courses that were previously approved for remote instruction due to exceptional circumstances will remain remote, but all other courses will return to their Academic Senate-approved delivery modes.

This decision was made following careful consultation with other UC campuses, our public health advisory committee, the Academic Senate, student and staff leadership, and local health officials, along with an assessment of on-campus and community metrics such as case counts, available isolation space, positivity rates, and testing capacity. We are also mindful of the important social and psychological benefits for students of being together in-person on campus.

Campus Has Been Open
Since I last wrote to you on January 14 about our instructional plans, the Omicron wave appears to have reached a peak in California and begun we hope will be its much-anticipated decline. The campus has remained open, many staff (including those in my office) and student workers have been working on campus each day, research activity has continued, and students have returned to on-campus housing.

Student housing, dining facilities, the Library, Highlander Union Building, Highlander One Stop Shop, Student Recreation Center, Student Success Center, bookstore and most offices have been open since the beginning of Winter quarter. Thank you to the student workers who have continued to serve our campus community both on and off campus during this period of disruption.

Conditions Are Improved
As planned, our temporary pivot to remote instruction allowed the university to slow down the repopulation of the campus, conduct testing for students and employees coming back from holiday gatherings, and provide time for those who tested positive to isolate and recover.

Reported cases among students and employees are down substantially since the start of the quarter. The number of students in isolation on campus is also down, following a peak in the second week of the quarter. Positivity rates and demand for testing are much improved following the expected surge immediately after the holiday season. And more than 4,500 students have taken COVID-19 tests on campus since the start of the quarter.

Student Accommodations
Although we avoided the worst part of the Omicron wave, it is possible that case rates will remain elevated as we resume in-person instruction. Therefore, we expect there will be higher-than-normal student absences due to isolation and quarantine requirements.

To help students remain current in their coursework while following their prescribed isolation and quarantine protocols, I have asked that each department and program discuss how best to accommodate temporary student absences so that students don't fall behind. If you are unable to attend class due to mandatory isolation or quarantine, please contact your instructors for guidance.

As was the case before the pandemic, instructors may determine the best way to manage their course if they are temporarily unable to teach in-person for another reason. This may include temporarily shifting to remote instruction until the instructor can return to the classroom.

Health and Safety Precautions
I am grateful that our campus community continues to take COVID-19 health and safety measures seriously. We are more than 95 percent vaccinated as a campus. Booster requirements are in place. Indoor masking will continue, with strong compliance among our students and surgical and N95 masks now available on campus. Robust testing protocols also will continue for anyone who is unvaccinated, symptomatic, or exposed.

The Well is making surgical and N95 masks, and COVID-19 wellness kits, available to UCR students. To request masks or kits, click here.

As announced last week, students should obtain and submit proof of their COVID-19 booster by January 31. Student Health Services is collecting student booster records and will begin offering on-campus vaccinations to students this week. To schedule your COVID-19 vaccine appointment, please call Student Health Services at 951-827-3031. Please note that your vaccine will be free regardless of insurance. Information on other locations to obtain booster shots can be found on our vaccines page.

Please remember to get tested before returning to campus, and do not return if you are sick. The student testing site is open for all UCR students, regardless of vaccination status. Click here for hours of operation and for instructions on how to get tested on campus. Short-term parking is available in lots 15 and 21.

If you test positive for COVID-19, please immediately report the results via the Daily Wellness Check, stay home, and do not go to class or work. Information on reported cases will be published on the Dashboards page of the Campus Return website.

Answers to other frequently asked questions can be found here.

Thank You for Doing Your Part
Once again, I thank you all for your continued flexibility and patience as we navigate the complexities of this ever-shifting and extremely frustrating pandemic. With your help, I hope we can provide you with the top-notch residential research university experience you signed up for, while maintaining our vigilance to ensure everyone's health and safety. I look forward to seeing your masked faces on campus.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Watkins
Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor