

UIC UF Vision for Moving Forward, Fall 2020
Health & Safety Statement
Approved by the UIC United Faculty Executive Board

We are in uncertain times. There is not one right answer or best strategy for moving forward in all contexts. Scientific knowledge and understanding of the pandemic virus changes daily, demanding that we keep abreast of the best evidence to inform our judgment and decisions in planning the 2020-2021 academic year. We also must act in accordance with UIC's own guiding principles and the interests of our community, so we must ask ourselves—Whom does UIC serve? What are our values?

UICUF values the health and safety of all UIC students, faculty, staff, their families, and their communities, and is committed to ensuring that health and safety are the foundation for all decisions related to University operations during this pandemic and its potential endemic transition. This is the umbrella under which any world-class university must provide its education; this is a matter of right and justice for all students, faculty, and staff.

UICUF opposes any request by UIC for exception to state and municipal rules or guidelines, as the upper administration has suggested it will seek. Additionally, accepting state and local guidelines *as a minimum*, we expect that the UIC administration will work with faculty to establish COVID-19 specific policies and procedures aligned with the health and safety of all students, faculty, staff, their families, and their communities, to insure educational engagement and success.

What should be our rules for “re-entry”? Above all else, caution. Premature lifting or release of any feature of the current guidelines set by the state and/or city is unacceptable. Current health and safety evidence demands adequate control of COVID-19 transmission in order for universities to resume functioning. Drawing on the expertise of our many members in healthcare, UICUF wishes to promote a clear and transparent vision for re-opening the UIC campus that explicitly articulates what measures will be taken to protect the community. Practically, this means a full program of mitigation across all campus spaces, including structural and resource support for:

- Hygiene—hand washing, surface disinfecting
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)—use of gloves and masks/face shields
- Social distancing—while 6 feet is the current recommendation, that length is somewhat arbitrary and could change with time. Distance safety is related to characteristics of the space including temperature, humidity, and air circulation, as well as the disease prevalence and social risk acceptance. Particular requirements for our high-rise, commuter campus will involve specific consideration for elevator use and stairways.
- Surveillance of transmission:

- Screening—symptom assessment and reporting
- Testing—at this point, there seem to be two basic options a) testing every person at regular intervals; b) testing with adequate sampling.
- Contact tracing—along with a robust system of quarantine for cases/contacts
- Quality and management of indoor air: indoor air management has not received as much attention as social distancing with COVID-19, but we know from hospitals the importance of indoor air management for infection control. Negative airflow technology and HEPA filtration systems are established practice in health institutions, and some type of air quality measure is important for all institutions. The simple truth is that public health authorities have not yet established best COVID-19 practices for non-health care settings.
- Expertise and a clearly tailored set of operational procedures: given the various and unique needs of buildings and social spaces across campus, it is important to incorporate the insights and perspectives of faculty across disciplines about how to adequately address the various structural and social contexts ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff. Currently, there does not appear to be an established university health and safety task force or committee providing guidance, as the Chancellor has promised.

Ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and their families and communities does not stop at the campus boundaries. This commitment necessitates attention to and respect for an individual's specific life circumstances and relationships. Vulnerable populations abound in the UIC community in relation to the high number of intergenerational, working-class/essential worker households that often include populations with statistical likelihood of increased risk factors, such as underlying health conditions. This is also in many ways the case with the faculty as well. Our commitment also obliges consideration of and accommodation to related transportation and technology needs. A truly inclusive environment takes into account all these types of medical and social vulnerabilities.

While these are difficult and trying times, they are also times for innovation and creativity. UIC has the opportunity to create a SAFE CAMPUS and contribute to SAFE COMMUNITIES through policies and procedures that minimize infections and maximize lives saved. We urge the formation of campus policies with, above all, these points in mind, and with the administration recognizing both the need and the desirability of full shared governance with all relevant stakeholders in the formation of such policy.