

CCAC: From Community Standards to Pandemic Standards: Summary Advice

This document summarizes the CCAC's discussions of what has up to now been referred to as "Community Standards." We propose that this moniker be changed to "Pandemic Standards." Our discussions have focused on two primary areas: Culture and Enforcement. Culture refers to the elements that will promote knowledge and investment in public health rules and guidelines. Enforcement refers to consequences for those who are unwilling to consistently follow public health rules and guidelines.

During these conversations, we were able to hear from leaders in student services as well as faculty with expertise in relevant disciplines such as health communication and adolescent risk behavior. From these discussions, we would suggest deep consideration of the following areas and action by the administration and RIT.

Setting Expectations

Everyone in the community needs to know what we expect to happen with a larger number of students living on campus and a return to some in-person teaching. In order to clearly set expectations, we ask that the following questions be specifically answered in preparation for the spring semester.

- On what date will a final decision be made about whether to implement the plans for the spring semester? Are there plans for a staggered or delayed entry?
- Are there plans for students and others to shelter in place if campus or community infection rates reach certain levels? And, if so, how will these areas be staffed? How will food be delivered? Who will clean these areas?
- What metrics or combination of metrics will be used to make these decisions?
- Who will make these decisions?
- How will the campus be notified?
- Do we expect a spike in infections in January when students return to campus? What will the time frame be until we see a leveling off in infections?
- What will quarantine and isolation be like? Students need to know what to expect. In addition, staff need clear answers to the following questions: How will these areas be staffed? How will food be delivered. Who will clean these areas?
- Specifically, how should students prepare for quarantine and isolation so that staff are minimally involved in having to move students who are potentially infected?

Clear, Consistent Communication

We would like to see the Carolina Together website fully revamped to make "Pandemic Standards" extremely detailed and clear so that there is no question as to what types of behavior is allowed and what

is not. Likewise, penalties for violations should be spelled out clearly on the website. In addition, we recommend the following:

Enhanced Visual Communication:

- Use visuals to show all members of the community what compliance with pandemic standards looks like in various situations.
- Use storytelling videos to help all community members understand that COVID has directly affected the lives of people on our campus. Examples include: What it was like to be sick even if not hospitalized. The loss of a close family member. The loss of income or a job. What severe illness was like even with an eventual recovery. We believe that more storytelling will help all members of the community invest in “pandemic standards” in a deeper way.
- Improve the Carolina Together website with visuals, videos, matrices, etc. that show what compliance with Pandemic Standards looks like.

Policy Communication:

- Policies regarding pandemic standards need to go through the policy review committee process for thorough vetting and language review/edit.
- Update the dashboard weekly with information about violations and consequences. The quarterly reporting that is proposed is wholly insufficient.
- Communicate clearly that the Honor Code is still in effect and consequences for honor code violations remain in place.

Providing Support

Note: In this document we are focusing specifically on support for staff and students. Faculty occupy a privileged position in the University structure, have considerable choice and flexibility about how they work, and have more job security whether tenured or untenured than staff. In addition, the faculty care hub, the keep teaching initiative, and the relaxing of tenure timelines have already been put into place to support faculty. We recognize that in a global pandemic, nothing could be enough. But from our conversations, CCAC believes that, at this time, additional focus needs to be placed on support for staff and students.

For Staff:

- Recognize that staff do not have as much choice and flexibility in how or where they work.
- The Chancellor’s Office, in addition to the benefits office, should promote the COVID-19 shared leave bank.
- Provide staff who work directly with students with protective gear and training that is state-of-the-art.
- Find ways to recognize and reward the efforts of staff such as hazard pay, increased flexibility, easy access to free, on-site testing for themselves and family members.
- Create an online staff care hub that is similar to the student and faculty care hubs.
- **The Chancellor’s Office should communicate that staff who can work remotely may continue to do so if they choose in order to continue to de-densify the campus.**
- There is a high degree of concern that rank-and-file employees will be reprimanded at a higher rate than supervisors for noncompliance due to their visibility on campus.
 - Management should lead by example
 - All disciplinary action against employees for COVID-19 compliance infractions should be fair and equitable across the University.

- COVID-19 testing for employees required to be on campus should be available free of charge and required depending on the employees' risk of exposure or risk of infecting others. Supervisors and managers should encourage these employees to take advantage of testing and give them flexibility during their shifts to take the tests.
- Provide on-site testing for third shift housekeepers before their shift is over as most of them are rushing home at 7:00am to get children to school. 6:00am would work for third shift.
- Any employees required to work on campus who are at high risk of exposure and/or have higher risk of complications from COVID-19 should have priority access to any vaccine that is made available including those staff members working in transportation that are involved in transporting students to quarantine and isolation spaces, staff who are required to work around student athletes (a group of students currently experiencing positive cases), housekeeping and facilities staff who work in and around student housing (these staff **do** have interactions with students during their shifts in an environment where the students **are not wearing masks**), and staff who support healthcare operations.
- Address the consensus housekeeping concern about suite-style restrooms. The proposed 4 is better than the usual 8, but housekeepers fear that this may still be too many using the same shower and toilet.
- Administration should acknowledge that housekeepers and facilities employees who work in and around dormitories are at higher risk as students do not wear masks in their living spaces. Making testing more difficult for these employees or discouraging them from getting tested does not engender the feeling that administration cares about their health and wellbeing.

For Students:

- Acknowledge and address what students have lost, e.g., networks, future job hopes, experiences they looked forward to
- Communicate empathy through recognition of student experiences with the virus including personal or family illness, job loss, loss of family members or friends, or increased anxiety that may accompany living through a pandemic.
- Communicate faculty willingness to be flexible in the classroom
- Recognize the extensive degree to which the pandemic is impacting students—including graduate students—and respond with reasonable expectations and accommodations.
- Give faculty specific examples of how to be accommodating:
 - Video on or off in the classroom
 - Communicate understanding
 - Don't load up on busy work
 - Limit after-hours communication
 - Sakai or syllabi as a site for communication about rules/standards
- Providing more financial support for students: CARES Act, technology stipends, or other sources. Fundraise specifically for funds that can off-set students' needs. Provide more work/study opportunities. Increase mental health support, including check-in surveys and expansion of programming.
- Streamline support avenues to the extent possible. Make the online student care hub a one-stop shop for student needs.
- Give students more ways to safely interact and have fun.
 - e.g., fire pits at Notre Dame,
 - Yoga on the lawn,
 - Small group outside walks or hikes—masked.

- Deans and chairs should be more involved in direct outreach to students and parents.
- The chancellor and other campus leaders should be directly interacting with students by walking the campus, eating in dining halls, etc. to encourage and notice compliance.
- Local businesses should be enlisted to provide reinforcers for good public health behavior including while students are in quarantine or isolation. Examples include gift certificates for participating in contact tracing, welcome baskets for quarantine and isolation.
- Communicate that “this set of behaviors is how we get to be on campus; without them we can’t be here.”

Enforcement

- Pandemic standards must be decisively enforced from the start.
- Greek life should be closely monitored to ensure compliance.
 - Sororities and fraternities that fail to comply should risk disciplinary action up to suspension of individuals and/or charters, depending on the severity of the infraction.
- Any student failing to adhere to guidelines should be disciplined up to and including suspension.
- Controls should be put in place for campus activities to reduce crowd sizes at events.
- We have already addressed the need for clear communication in other parts of this document. This need is particularly strong for enforcement. All members of the community must know the consequences for not complying with “pandemic standards” both on campus and off.
- Consider coordinating with the town to provide a civil penalty for individuals not complying with gathering sizes, mask wearing, etc. when out in town.
- Keep campus rules the same for the entire spring semester regardless of whether state guidelines change.

Coordination and Other Suggestions

We are encouraged by a number of initiatives on campus aimed at supporting a successful spring semester. We would also encourage the development of a coordinating group that would examine the full set of health behavior/pandemic standards and supportive interventions that are being proposed on the campus. Such a group would allow for coordination between the health communications working group, student affairs, Chapel Hill and Campus law enforcement, the Health Ambassadors initiative (<https://ipep.unc.edu/students/carolina-covid-19-student-services-corps-carolina-cssc/>). Please connect with Dr. Pettifor for more details on this recommendation.