

June 28, 2021

Dear Students,

After the year we have all experienced, I hope that you and your families are enjoying some much-needed rejuvenation and time together. It is a much quieter and slower pace on campus this summer. We miss the enthusiasm and energy that you bring to our community, and we are excited to see you and welcome you in August!

I am sending you this email to communicate important information about Messiah's plans for the fall, as well as some of the practical campus life benefits of being immunized against COVID-19.

1. **Return to a full in-person, on-campus experience:** As we announced earlier this spring, Messiah will be open this fall for a full in-person, on-campus experience—providing face-to-face classes in regular classroom spaces and without rotations, robust co-curricular programs such as in-person chapel, athletics, clubs and organizations, cultural events, as well as off-campus educational opportunities. The University is returning to its regularly planned academic calendar, including fall and spring breaks, and is also opening off-campus travel, expanding on-campus socialization and has restored visitor access to campus.
2. **Pre-arrival campus checklist:** To help you prepare for your arrival on campus, the University has prepared the attached check list. *Please review this document carefully, as it contains information and action steps that we need from you before you come to campus.*
3. **COVID-19 Vaccines:** Messiah University views vaccination against COVID-19 as our best way to assure community health, and to avoid the kinds of disruptions seen across the country from COVID-19 illness or outbreaks. That said, given the fact that the FDA approval is currently emergency use, at this time, **Messiah University is not mandating COVID-19 vaccination for students for the fall 2021 semester.**

While not mandated, our community goal is that the majority of our student and employee populations be vaccinated prior to the start of the fall 2021 semester to assure a safe and uninterrupted in-person educational experience. This is particularly key for congregate living settings, such as residence halls, where spread of COVID-19 can be rapid and more difficult to contain. We greatly appreciate our students and employees who have already been vaccinated for COVID-19, and we continue to encourage as many as possible to continue to do so. Immunizing yourself against COVID-19 will greatly minimize your risk of potential illness and inconvenience during the academic year.

Students who are vaccinated, or become vaccinated this summer, should upload their vaccination card (starting with the first dose) to the Engle Center via the online student health portal. You may read more details—including a **wide range of weekly prize drawings to remind students to update their vaccination status**—at a campaign launched by the University this week called “Messiah’s Best Shot,” at www.messiah.edu/bestshot. *It is important to note that*

until we receive record of your vaccination documentation, your Messiah health record will show you as unvaccinated.

4. **Benefits for fully vaccinated students:**

- **Fully vaccinated students are significantly less likely to get sick and be required to go home for isolation.** We fully expect that the Pennsylvania Department of Health will continue to require the isolation of individuals who test positive for COVID-19 next fall. Unvaccinated students who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate at home* for a minimum of 10 days (the current CDC time period). While the COVID-19 vaccine is not perfect in preventing disease, the effectiveness of several of the vaccines is more than 90 percent; *being vaccinated significantly reduces your chance of getting sick and missing out on in-person experiences and opportunities.*

*Note: Limited isolation housing is available to students who live farther than 150 miles from campus or demonstrate circumstances that would prevent them from isolating at home. Regardless of their isolation location, the University will work with students to continue their coursework remotely.

- **Fully vaccinated students do not have to quarantine.** Unless symptomatic, fully vaccinated students do not have to go into quarantine if they are identified as a “close contact” (within six feet for more than 15 minutes) of a person who tested positive for COVID-19. We anticipate that the public health expectations from the state and CDC will continue to mean that students who are unvaccinated and identified as close contacts will need to return home* for a 7–10-day quarantine.

*Note: Limited quarantine housing is available to students who live farther than 150 miles from campus or demonstrate circumstances that would prevent them from quarantining at home. Regardless of their quarantine location, the University will work with students to continue their coursework remotely.

- **Fully vaccinated students do not have to participate in pre-arrival* or ongoing surveillance** COVID-19 testing.** As per the CDC guidelines, vaccinated individuals only need to be tested when symptomatic.

*See pre-arrival checklist referenced in #2 above for details.

** Students who are not documented in the Engle Center health portal as fully vaccinated will be automatically enrolled in the campus surveillance testing pool.

- **Fully vaccinated students encounter fewer challenges to participation in certain off-campus activities.** While Messiah is not requiring students to have the COVID-19 vaccination to enroll this fall, some enhancement programs, such as cross-cultural experiences and other international travel, may require students to be vaccinated. Additionally, some off-campus program partners, such as school districts for student teaching or healthcare clinical sites, may require students to be vaccinated to participate.

5. **Masking:** On June 28, the state of Pennsylvania eliminated its mandate requiring individuals to wear masks as a mitigation effort against COVID-19. In

response, **Messiah University is no longer requiring students, employees or visitors to wear masks on campus in most settings** (with the exception of large indoor group gatherings, in accord with Messiah’s congregate living environment and CDC guidelines). Note that *we anticipate lifting these remaining limited masking requirements when Messiah’s student and employee populations reach a 70 percent “community immunity” vaccination rate.* In the interim, unvaccinated students, employees and visitors are asked to protect their own health and that of the Messiah community—particularly given Messiah’s congregate living setting—by following [the CDC’s guidelines for masking](#).

Messiah respects everyone’s right to make decisions about their personal health care. Given the current public health expectations, however, and our plans for a full and open campus this fall, we thought it was important to share this information and our expectations in advance. **At this time, the University strongly recommends that all members of our campus community become immunized against COVID-19 as the most effective way to minimize the risk of illness, disruption and inconvenience next fall.** We do *not* want students to miss out on athletic competition; performing with their music, dance or theatre ensembles; be absent from their internships or clinical placements, or lose time with friends, professors and other campus activities because they need to quarantine or isolate.

Please watch for additional communication from Messiah University in the weeks ahead, including the re-launch in mid-July of our [Together@Messiah website](#), where the University will continue to provide details about its upcoming plans for the fall semester. You will also continue to receive details from Messiah on our [Welcome Week schedule and activities](#).

We can’t wait to see you and welcome you to campus in just a few weeks!

Warm regards,

Kim S. Phipps
President