1. Is Messiah University requiring its students and/or employees to be vaccinated for COVID-19 for the fall 2021 semester?

Messiah University sees the COVID vaccines approved by the FDA for emergency use in the United States as its institutional path back to normal life, and strongly encourages all students and employees to be vaccinated. That said, because FDA approval had not been granted to any of the vaccines prior to the start of the academic year, Messiah University did not mandate COVID-19 vaccination for students or employees for the fall 2021 semester.*

Messiah’s position remains, however, that a widespread vaccination of our campus community provides the best opportunity for us to return to normal, pre-pandemic operations and to make university life feel much more like it is supposed to be for everyone.

*Note: some employees and students due to their specific higher-risk placements, the campus health care center for example, do require vaccination. While Messiah is not requiring students to have the COVID-19 vaccination to enroll this fall, some enhancement programs, such as but not limited to, 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.

2. Now that the FDA has approved the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, will Messiah make vaccination mandatory?

As we have noted in previous communications, changes in the pandemic or vaccine approval status could trigger a re-evaluation of the University’s vaccination policy. Messiah’s Integration and Response Team will certainly consider this new development into its ongoing decisions regarding vaccination policy. However, the University has no change to announce at this time. Should a COVID-19 vaccine mandate be put into place at some point in the future, it would be similar to our current student vaccine policy (a policy that currently requires multiple vaccinations for students) and includes options for both religious and medical exemptions.

3. Is Messiah University providing students and employees access to the COVID-19 vaccine on campus?

Messiah University students and employees, and their family members (age 16 or older), are now able to be vaccinated for free on campus at the Engle Center (with the Moderna vaccine). Email LJWeaver@messiah.edu to schedule an appointment.
4. Should I inform Messiah University if I have been vaccinated?

Yes, it is important for Messiah to know from a public health standpoint how much of its population has been vaccinated. Current students and employees who have been fully vaccinated should submit proof of vaccination to the Engle Center:

- Go to the [Online Health Portal](https://messiah.studenthealthportal.com);
- Go to MY FORMS, then COVID IMMUNIZATION HISTORY FORM
- Follow the instructions.

5. What does Messiah consider to be “fully vaccinated”?

Following the CDC’s guidelines, Messiah considers an individual fully vaccinated two weeks after the receipt of the second dose in a two-dose vaccine series, or two weeks after receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine).

6. If I’m a student who’s been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 will I still need to test, quarantine or follow campus mitigation measures during the fall 2021 semester?

Below is a summary of key benefits for students who have provided proof of full vaccination to the Engle Center:

**Fully vaccinated students:**
- Do not have to participate in pre-arrival or ongoing surveillance COVID-19 testing.
- Are significantly less likely to get sick and be required to isolate.
- Do not have to automatically quarantine if identified as a close contact.
- 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 but not limited to, 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.
- And most importantly … are more personally protected from infection and from spreading COVID-19 to others.

**However, fully vaccinated individuals may still be required to test and quarantine if:**

- they are exposed to a person confirmed to have COVID-19 (test required); but will not need to quarantine unless they become symptomatic or test positive;
- they become symptomatic with COVID-like symptoms at any time and as advised by Engle Center medical personnel.

**Note:** Individuals who are partially vaccinated (i.e., someone who is two weeks from the first dose of vaccine in a two-dose series) may be eligible for a lesser quarantine or enhanced health and safety measures in the event of an exposure and as determined by Engle Center Health professionals.
7. What if I’ve already had COVID-19? Does the University consider this in its campus health protocols?

Yes, Messiah does specify protocols related to prior infection with COVID-19. Persons with a history of COVID-19 in the past *90 days:

- Must still follow all student and employee mitigation protocols as outlined by the University.
- Are exempt from COVID-19 surveillance/screening tests that the University requires of all unvaccinated students and employees for 90 days* from their INITIAL positive test date.
- MUST show proof of their positive test to be exempt from surveillance testing or qualify for the above mitigation protocols. NOTE: The University does not accept symptom history or antibody tests as proof of a prior positive infection.

*This is the time window for which there is the broadest agreement across the medical community for the longevity of natural immunity protection from COVID-19.

8. Why doesn’t Messiah accept antibody tests for those who have previously had COVID-19 as proof of natural immunity against future infection?

Messiah acknowledges that there is a broad range of perspective on the use of antibody testing to infer natural immunity from COVID-19. However, in setting consistent standards for its own institutional health protocols, the University’s position is that—due to limited data on how much protection and for how long antibodies provide protection against reinfection—antibody tests should not yet be used to conclusively evaluate a person’s level of immunity or protection from COVID-19.

Messiah’s position is consistent with that of the CDC, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Mayo Clinic, the Cleveland Clinic, and the American Academy of Family Practice, among other public health organizations, that the research in this area is simply not definitive enough at this point—particularly when trying to manage the spread of COVID-19 in a congregate living setting such as Messiah. These public health entities additionally recommend that individuals should be vaccinated, regardless of whether they have already had COVID-19, due to the added protection it provides against future infection.

9. Can I get COVID-19 even if I’m fully vaccinated?

While COVID-19 vaccines are working well, no vaccine is 100 percent effective. As new variants emerge, some people who are fully vaccinated against COVID 19 are still getting sick. These are called “breakthrough infections.” Still, we know that overall, being fully vaccinated significantly reduces your chance of getting sick and missing out on in-person experiences and opportunities, and mitigates the severity of disease if you do contract COVID.

10. Aren’t college-aged people some of the least likely people to be severely affected by COVID-19? Why the need for vaccination?

The data show that individuals in all age groups can be severely affected by COVID-19. The data also show that the largest group of unvaccinated individuals is comprised of 18–
30-year-olds. With numerous variants circulating worldwide, most currently the highly contagious Delta Variant, a large population of unvaccinated individuals—especially in congregate settings—can be detrimental to not only the physical health of Messiah’s community, but in our ability to remain open throughout the academic year.

Additionally, Messiah’s campus has students and employees who are themselves, or live with individuals, in high-risk categories. Encouraging vaccination is just one of the many ways we can be good neighbors and friends and help protect those we encounter both on and off campus.

11. If I am an out-of-state student, may I be vaccinated in Pennsylvania?

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, you may be vaccinated outside of your home state. However, other states have been making changes to their related protocols, so it is important to follow/confirm this on your state’s department of health website.

“MESSIAH’S BEST SHOT” CAMPAIGN

12. What is “Messiah’s Best Shot campaign”?

“Messiah’s Best Shot” was a social media campaign that ran from June 28, through Aug. 19, 2021, created in partnership with the University’s leadership team and Messiah’s Student Government Association (SGA) leadership. The campaign was designed to:

- Share the University’s position that it is important that the majority of Messiah’s student and employee populations be vaccinated prior to the start of the fall 2021 semester to assure a safe and undisrupted in-person educational experience;
- Help students understand the benefits of vaccination for individuals and the campus community;
- To incentivize students to update their vaccination status with the Engle Center through a weekly prize drawing.

More details about the campaign are available at www.messiah.edu.

13. Doesn’t the “Best Shot” campaign pressure students into vaccination and sharing personal vaccination information?

The University wants to be clear that getting the vaccine and/or uploading a vaccine card are optional and we certainly do not want anyone to feel coerced. Messiah respects individual’s rights to make decisions related to their individual healthcare. Rather, the campaign was a way for the University to incentivize students who were willing to share their vaccination status leading up to the start of the academic year—so that we could have an accurate understanding of what percentage of our campus population was vaccinated for the purposes of our fall planning. We are doing all we can to balance the importance of personal choice with the need to keep our students and employees healthy and thriving this fall.
14. Where did the campaign’s 70% vaccination rate goal come from?

According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, more than 550 colleges and universities in the U.S. are mandating the vaccine, and that number continues to grow. While Messiah has chosen not to mandate the COVID-19 vaccine for our students, according to reliable public health resources (i.e., Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, CDC, Mayo Clinic), as of the date of the campaign launch (June 28, 2021) 70 percent was the minimum number needed to provide protection to individuals in a congregate setting such as Messiah University. Given the rise of the Delta variant, however, this minimal vaccination rate is now estimated to be in the range of 85 to 90 percent.

15. Did the campaign have a positive effect?

While the campaign did not move the undergraduate student body’s vaccination rate to 70 percent or more prior to the start of the academic year, the rate did rise significantly over the summer. At the start of the campaign on June 28, our undergraduate student vaccination rate was 27 percent. At the end of the campaign on August 19, our undergraduate student vaccination rate was 59 percent. It is important to contextualize, however, that students also had to either provide proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test to return to campus, so this, in addition to the incentive of the campaign, was also a significant factor.

16. How were the “Best Shot” weekly prize drawings funded?

The campaign drawing prizes were funded through a mix of donated prizes and Messiah’s operational budget. This campaign funding was significantly offset with substantial cost savings that the University realizes by reducing the amount of students who will be required to participate in ongoing COVID-19 testing throughout the fall semester (because vaccinated students are exempt from testing).

17. Why is Messiah only posting information sources on its “Best Shot” that support COVID-19 vaccination?

The vaccination information and research that Messiah has provided on its website represent the medical and scientific data that the University is using to drive and support its institutional decision making. We respect an individual’s right to make their own medical decisions and are not requiring students to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to enroll this fall. The University, however, also seeks to be clear about its own expectations, information sources, and its position that encouraging as many students and employees to be vaccinated as possible is the best way to ensure a safe and healthy campus community for everyone.

You may learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine at the national level on the CDC website, or at the statewide level on the Pennsylvania Department of Health website. Visit this link to find a COVID-19 vaccination site near you.