

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY
26 December 2020

What Students Should Know: Spring 2021, COVID-19 and Returning to Campus!

As we return to campus in spring 2021, the SUNY College of Optometry's first priority is the health and safety of our campus community, including our students, faculty, and staff. The best way to maintain the safest environment possible throughout 2021 and beyond is for each of us to take steps to minimize the risks for ourselves and all members of the College community. We can do this by:

- wearing face coverings (masks)
- hand washing
- social distancing
- completing daily screenings
- participating in testing and tracing
- being mindful of our surroundings and the impact we have

Any of us alone can spread this disease and cause harm to others. But **all of us together can build a community that is safe and healthy**, where educational success is possible.

Here's what you need to know and do as we move forward:

Stay Informed: Students should continually monitor their emails for any changes or updates!

The College's principal means of communication is by email. By now, you have all received a series of emails from various individuals on campus containing a host of information regarding COVID-19 and the College's COVID-19 related policies and procedures. These emails have included Dr. Heath's periodic "President's Missive", instructions on pool testing from Cris Gomez, RN, the College's COVID Coordinator; updates on personal protective equipment and College protocols based on CDC and NYSDOH guidance from Dr. McGovern, Chief Medical Officer; and information on the academic program from Dr. Troilo, VP and Dean of Academic Affairs. *Please make sure to check your College email regularly so that you stay informed of COVID-related updates.*

Most importantly, the College has established a COVID information page on its website – where you can access a panoply of information regarding the College's COVID-related policies and procedures. That webpage can be found at <https://www.sunyopt.edu/coronavirus>.

Return to Campus Safely – Travel and Testing Requirements

Pursuant to NYS policy, health professions students may be designated as essential workers exempt from certain quarantine and isolation requirements that otherwise would be required. The College has designated its students as essential workers, so no specific quarantine period will be required prior to return to the College from the holiday break. However, as set forth in the Testing section below, all 1st, 2nd and 3rd year OD students must get tested prior to their return from the holiday break and the College will pool-test these students after their return from the holiday break or those returning from an externship in a non-contiguous state.

In addition, the College has implemented a Travel Policy, accessible here, <https://www.sunyopt.edu/pdfs/covid-19/Travel-Guidence-and-Policy.pdf>, which sets forth the rules

and restrictions regarding return from travel to non-contiguous states and foreign countries. This policy sets forth specific testing requirements that must be followed when returning from such travel.

Get Screened Daily

Everyone coming to campus, including students, must complete a COVID-19 daily self-assessment prior to arrival at the College. The daily self-assessment is contained within the College's SafeInSight App which you should have downloaded on your phone. Successful completion of the assessment results in a green check mark – which must be displayed to University Police upon entry. In addition, you are required to undergo a thermal screening prior to entering the College each day.

COVID Testing

The College has established a Surveillance Testing Plan, which can be found here, <https://www.sunyopt.edu/pdfs/covid-19/SUNY-Optometry.Surveillance-Testing-Plan-9.24.20.pdf>, pursuant to which all students will be tested on a regular basis, approximately every 3-4 weeks while they are at the College.

Travel over the Winter Holidays: 1st, 2nd and 3rd year OD students

1. Pre-Return to College Testing and Self-Assessment Survey Reporting Requirements:

Students are **required to complete the COVID daily self-assessment** on **SafeInSight** the 7 days prior to their return, (one submission per day for seven days).

All students **MUST secure a COVID test (Rapid or PCR) within 7 days** BEFORE returning to the College, regardless of where the student was located during winter break. (Note: If you were directly contacted by the COVID coordinator and medically excused, please follow the guidance provided at the time for testing timeframes.)

Proof of negative test results must be submitted to the College before the student can return to campus. The College will share test results with others only a need-to-know basis, providing results to such individuals as the College's COVID Coordinator, Vice President for Student Affairs, and Chief Medical Officer.

- Students must upload their pre-return COVID test results to the College via the following link: [Back to School - Spring 2021 \(office.com\)](#)
- The COVID test must be taken within 7 days of the student's physical return to campus (not necessarily the official semester start date – January 4th)

2. Reporting positive cases during break:

If a student tests **positive** for SARS-CoV-2 and has recovered while on break, the student:

- Must send their positive test report immediately to covidtestreports@sunyopt.edu.
- Must inform Cris Gomez RN, COVID Coordinator via email at CGomez2@sunyopt.edu within 7 days of their return to College
- Should follow up with their health care provider for medical guidance.

If a student tests **positive** for SARS-CoV-2 **within 14 days** prior to their return to the College, the student should:

- Email Cris Gomez RN, COVID Coordinator CGomez2@sunyopt.edu with their positive test result and your contact information and await further instructions/guidance.
- Not report to the College unless cleared by the COVID Coordinator.

Pool Testing

The College will be pool testing all 1st, 2^d, and 3rd and year students returning from the holiday break, according to the following schedule:

- Wednesday, January 6, 2021: Class of 2022
- Monday, January 11, 2021: Class of 2024
- Tuesday, January 12, 2021: Class of 2023

Note - Tuesday, January 19, 2021: Class of 2021 – Assigned to the UEC will be tested along with employees.

Rapid Testing

Rapid testing via the BD Veritor Plus Analyzer is available at the College. **On-campus Rapid Testing is restricted to asymptomatic individuals.** This include students returning from taking the NBEO exam in North Carolina and/or from clinical rotations in non-contiguous states; individuals identified as a close contact of a confirmed COVID-positive case within the College through the College's contact tracing program; individuals included in a pooled-testing group that is identified with a positive result; and employees traveling to non-contiguous states for official College business.

Students present in a non-contiguous state for more than five days are responsible for securing a COVID test (rapid or PCR) within 72 hours before their return to New York and four days after their return to New York. If the out-of-state travel was not made for the holiday break, or for a clinical rotation, the student will be responsible for getting their own post-return testing.

Check the COVID-19 Dashboard

SUNY maintains a comprehensive dashboard of COVID-19 testing and infection rate status across the system and at each campus, including the College of Optometry.

<https://www.suny.edu/covid19-tracker/>.

Be Responsible – It's Easy to Do Your Part

Each of us can take small steps to protect ourselves and the campus community. Because COVID-19 is highly contagious, these simple measures apply **both on and off-campus**:

- **Wear a face covering** (mask) over your nose and mouth at all times at the College, including in the lobby, classrooms, conference rooms, clinic waiting room, labs, and other public spaces, even when you are able to maintain six feet of social distancing.
 - Exceptions to this requirement include when students are eating meals on-campus while seated and socially distanced, and when faculty and staff are alone in their office or other private spaces.
- **Regularly wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and use hand sanitizer where soap and water are not available.
- **Practice social distancing** at all times to reduce the risk of transmission.
- **Refrain from handshakes**, high fives, and other person-to-person contact to limit the spread of germs.

- **Disinfect commonly used surfaces** after use to protect the next user.
- **Abide by all signage** regarding reduced capacity of rooms and other spaces.
- **Stay home** if you have symptoms of COVID-19, a fever of 100 degrees or higher, feel ill or have recently been exposed to COVID-19. The COVID Coordinator will provide guidance for each case.

If Exposed, Complete Mandatory Quarantine and Isolation

Students who test positive for COVID-19, have been exposed to individuals who tested positive for COVID-19, or are informed by a state or local health department, or medical or campus official that they are “at risk” for having COVID-19 may be required to quarantine or isolate. The campus has specific information about restrictions related to quarantine/isolation, as well as information regarding access to support services (including free lodging where necessary, delivery of food and medicine, and daily health check-ins). Information about services and how to access them can be obtained from the College’s COVID Coordinator Cris Gomez, RN at (212) 938-5882 or at cgomez2@sunyopt.edu.

Follow the Rules or Face Disciplinary Action

When the campus learns of a violation of the rules associated with COVID-19 safety, students may lose access to campus facilities. Other disciplinary actions may be taken by the Student Conduct and/or Human Resources Offices. Student conduct is governed by the College’s Student Code of Conduct https://www.sunyopt.edu/pdfs/academics/Student_Handbook_Feb_2016.pdf. Minimum sanctions are outlined in the [Uniform Sanctioning in Response to COVID-19 Student Violations](#). Consistent with SUNY policy, students who are partially or completely removed from the institution due to a violation are not eligible for refunds.

Take Care of Yourself – Physically and Mentally

The mental wellbeing of our students is of primary importance to us. We recognize that the pandemic has presented unique challenges to our students' mental health. As a result, the College has updated its mental health resources page (sunyopt.edu/mentalhealth) in order to highlight current mental health services available at the College and to promote services offered by SUNY System.

Services highlighted include:

Mental Health Counseling: The College continues to offer 5 free counseling sessions through our psychologist on retainer. Students can access this service by emailing the counselor directly through the SUNY Opt SafeinSight app or through the link under the Mental Health Counseling tab on the College’s website (www.sunyopt.edu/mentalhealth).

SUNY Opt Pulse: Short surveys sent by the VP of Student Affairs to check-in on the student body. Students can describe challenges that they are facing and the VP personally follows up with students in need.

ReachOut/Project Hope: Staffed by trained volunteers, **ReachOut** provides support to New Yorkers who are impacted by COVID-19, 8 AM to 10 PM, 7 days a week. The service is free, confidential, and anonymous. The hotline number is: 1-844-863-9314.

Crisis Text Line: Staffed 24/7/365 by trained volunteers skilled in active listening, Crisis Text Line helps individuals in distress move from a hot moment to a cool calm. There is a New York-specific keyword for Crisis Text Line: SUNY participants can text “Got5U” to 741-741.

Food Pantry: The Food Pantry at Guttman Community College will continue to be available to students. The Food pantry can be accessed Monday through Friday from 10am-3pm by appointment only. SUNY Optometry students can call in advance to set-up an appointment for pick-up of non-perishable food items (perishable items are not available at this time).

T-Chats: The College offers sessions on various topics, including mental health and stress management, throughout the semester.

Suicide Prevention: For more resources on suicide prevention, students are encouraged to visit the *Suicide Prevention tab* on the link www.sunyopt.edu/mentalhealth.

The College has also encouraged students pursue the free online suicide prevention training available through: <https://qprinstitute.com>.

Understand What’s Being Offered On-Campus and Online

All lectures at the College will be delivered via remote access. Labs, clinics, and integrated seminars will be conducted in-person. Midterms and final exams will be administered remotely.

Get Instructional and Technology Help

Technical support assistance is available by contacting the Office of Information Technology Services Help Desk at (212) 938-5730 or helpdesk@sunyopt.edu. In addition, online support guides are available to provide training resources with respect to various technologies used at the College, as well as answer general instructional support questions: <https://www.sunyopt.edu/offices/its/support-guides>

Request Accommodations for Disabilities

Students who wish to disclose covered disabilities and receive reasonable accommodations for their disabilities should contact Jacqueline Martinez, the College’s ADA Coordinator for students, at JMartinez@sunyopt.edu or at 212-938-5509. Examples of specific accommodations that may be offered can be found on the College’s website at <https://www.sunyopt.edu/accessibility/physical-accessibility>.

In the event of a mandatory PAUSE

In the event the College experiences a rise in COVID cases, such that either 100 individuals or 5% (36 cases) of the total on-campus population – inclusive of students, faculty, and staff – whichever is less, tests positive for COVID-19 within a 14-day period, the College will be required to immediately (1) transition in-person didactic learning to remote format(s) and (2) limit on-campus activities for a period of 14 days. However, as a health care institution and College of Optometry, the College will be permitted to continue to conduct certain in-person activities, such as clinics, laboratory research, and other in-person activities required to obtain and/or maintain professional licensure or research activity. All such activities will

only be conducted if public health and safety can be maintained (in consultation with the Dept. of Health). This will be accomplished through social distancing, where possible, use of appropriate PPE, and increased cleaning and sanitization.

Limitations of On-Campus Activity

The College has previously limited on-Campus activities and events, and will continue to do so during the upcoming semester. Similarly, the College’s Fitness Center will continue to be closed.

Changes and Updates: The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic creates a fluid situation that may require unexpected changes in our response. Updates to scientific knowledge, public health guidance, or laws and regulations may mean SUNY and the College have to make changes to our standards and rules, including those indicated above. SUNY and the College will try to minimize these changes and their impact. We will keep you informed of new developments.

Thank you in advance for everything you are doing and will do to make 2021 safe for you, your fellow students, and the campus community and beyond.