

Re-Opening Higher Education in Connecticut

Approximately 190,000 students are enrolled in higher education institutions in Connecticut that employ about 45,000 of residents. Most colleges and universities in the state never shut down their teaching during the spring semester, but rather rapidly deployed online methods to continue educating students when the pandemic hit in mid-March.

On May 6th, Governor Lamont released [recommendations](#) from the Re-Open Connecticut Higher Education Committee to provide guidelines to allow for the gradual reopening of campuses over the course of the summer – at the discretion of each institution – based on the type of educational and residential programs offered.

The guidelines allow for select programs to re-open under four different phases and institutions must file plans for each phase with representatives of the Connecticut Department of Public Health and Mark Ojakian, the President of the Connecticut State College and University system.

For a full re-opening under Phase 3, campuses must have plans detailing how they propose to:

- Repopulate the campus in a phased way;
- Monitor health conditions to detect infection;
- Contain the spread of disease when detected; and
- Shut down the campus in the event it becomes necessary.

Clarifying updates have been issued by Mark Ojakian -- the state lead on re-opening higher education -- since the May 6th report was released in an effort to support implementation of the guidelines.

In general, campus re-opening plans must include strategies to address the following:

- **Testing:** Based on guidance released on June 23rd (see [Update #6](#)), all students that reside on campus must be tested upon return to campus or come to campus with proof of a negative test result within the last 14 days. Campuses are then required to test 5-10% of the resident students each week throughout the semester. The state will cover the cost of the sample testing for students at public colleges; private colleges must do this at their own expense.
- **Timing:** Re-population of campuses can begin on or after August 14th and classes may begin on or after August 24th. (see Updates [#1](#) and [#7](#))
- **Social distancing:** 6 feet of separation is advised whenever possible.
- **Density of classrooms and other areas where groups congregate:** 6 feet of separation between occupants.
- **Dining:** Dining functions may follow restaurant guidance (see [Update #7](#)).
- **Density of dormitories:** Roommates and suitemates shall be treated as a family unit. 6-foot spacing shall be preserved with other dorm occupants. Students with pre-existing health conditions should be assigned to single-occupancy rooms.

- **Bathroom dormitories:** Limit occupancy at any one time to ensure 6-feet of separation between occupants and provide for regular, deep cleaning. (see [Update #3](#))
- **Personal protective equipment:** All faculty, staff and students should wear masks
- **Disinfection:** Hand sanitizer available at entrances to all buildings, classrooms, and dining halls. Protocols in place to ensure surfaces in bathrooms, classrooms and other shared facilities are wiped down before and after every use. (see [Update #5](#))
- **Travel:** Avoid unnecessary travel domestically and internationally.
- **Screening:** Faculty, staff, and students should monitor their own symptoms and report them to health care providers.