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CUNY to End the Emergency COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate

Policy Change Aligns With Federal Government's Plan to End the Public Health Emergency, Progress in Battle Against Pandemic

Continues to Encourage Students, Faculty and Staff to Stay Current With Vaccines and Boosters



The City University of New York today announced that in the wake of significant advances in the three-year battle against COVID-19 and consistent with the federal government's plan to end the Public Health Emergency, it is ending the emergency

vaccination mandate for students, faculty and staff. The University worked closely with State and City health officials to make the determination which marks a major milestone in CUNY's fight against the pandemic.

The change is effective on the last day of the Spring semester, which for most colleges is May 23, and will allow students to enroll in classes, regardless of their vaccination status, starting with Summer sessions.

"We are confident that this is the appropriate time for CUNY to lift the COVID vaccine requirement as a condition of enrollment or employment, though we continue to encourage all students, faculty and staff to stay up to date with vaccinations," **said Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez.** "Throughout the pandemic, we have consistently put health and safety first while balancing it against our core mission of providing access to higher education to the greatest extent possible. We will continue to consult with public health experts, closely monitor data and adhere to all pertinent federal, state and city guidance should policies need to be modified moving forward."

"While the pandemic is not over, it is reassuring to see the progress we've made. To continue that progress, the Department reminds people that we are fortunate to have easily accessible safe and effective vaccines," **said Acting State Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald.** "High risk individuals such as people 65 and older, as well as younger people with underlying conditions should make sure they are up to date with the vaccine. The Department will continue to consult with CUNY administrators as we monitor the data and align recommendations with those issued by the CDC as we transition out of the Public Health Emergency."

The decision to lift the vaccine mandate aligns the University with the federal government's plan to let the Public Health Emergency for COVID-19 [expire in May](#). The change is subject to ratification by the CUNY Board of Trustees at their next meeting.

The end of the mandate will go into effect at 22 CUNY colleges and for all Central Office employees on May 23. For Kingsborough, LaGuardia and Guttman community colleges, whose shorter semesters run on a different schedule, the mandate will end on June 16, the last day of their current term.

CUNY's action comes in the wake of significant advances against COVID-19 in New York: Recent months have seen declining rates of infection, higher vaccination rates and generally less severe variants of the virus. New York City's COVID-19 level is currently low across all five boroughs, according to the Centers for Disease Control's [Community Level tracking](#).

According to current city and state data, nearly 80% of New Yorkers between 18 and 34 have completed their primary series of vaccinations. Nationally, according to the CDC, daily reported COVID-19 cases are down 92% since the peak of the Omicron surge at the end of January 2022. Hospitalizations and deaths have both declined by about 80% in that period.

CUNY has reported sustained low levels of positive test results that mirror the city and state's declining rates of infection. For the [one-week period ending April 9](#), CUNY sites tested 15,886 people with a positivity rate of 0.8%.

CUNY's COVID-19 vaccination mandate, instituted in the fall of 2021, required students to submit proof that they were fully vaccinated in order to enroll in classes that were either in-person or a hybrid of in-person and online. The vaccination policy has also applied to faculty, non-teaching instructional staff and employees in the Executive Compensation Plan. The policy provided for any member of the CUNY community who applied and received a religious exception or medical exemption or had not disclosed their vaccination status to submit to weekly testing for COVID-19.

Testing Program to End

In alignment with lifting the vaccine mandate, CUNY will also end its testing program and close its [testing sites](#) on campuses and the Central Office by the end of June. The program covered the weekly random testing of vaccinated students, faculty, and staff, along with members of the CUNY community who had been granted an exception or exemption, and those who did not want to disclose their vaccination status. The University will simultaneously also eliminate the use of the Cleared4 health verification platform, allowing colleges to go back to their standard processes for granting campus access.

These milestones in the fight against COVID-19 come three years and a month after the nation's largest urban public university moved 300,000 students, faculty and staff to remote learning and working within a week. The CUNY community, at the nation's epicenter of the pandemic, rallied to help the city, state and its own.

The Chancellor [launched an emergency fund](#) to aid students before the federal funds arrived, later CUNY oversaw the [timely distribution of \\$455 million](#) in federal grants to students, [and pardoned over \\$100 million in debt](#) to over 57,000 students. When the vaccine became available, it was a CUNY alum who received the [first shot in the U.S.](#)

The university launched its own [#VaxUpCUNY campaign](#) and worked with our government partners to host vaccination sites in colleges that put over half a million shots in people's arms. Faculty, meanwhile, conducted [COVID-focused research](#) and [developed COVID-related courses](#). Nursing and med students [joined the frontlines](#), and [students rallied to help](#) despite personal losses. The University community suffered [devastating losses](#) of lives during the pandemic and has an [In Memoriam webpage](#) to honor them.

[The City University of New York](#) is the nation's largest urban public university, a transformative engine of social mobility that is a critical component of the lifeblood of New York City. Founded in 1847 as the nation's first free public institution of higher education, CUNY today has seven community colleges, 11 senior colleges and seven

graduate or professional institutions spread across New York City's five boroughs, serving over 243,000 undergraduate and graduate students and awarding 55,000 degrees each year. CUNY's mix of quality and affordability propels almost six times as many low-income students into the middle class and beyond as all the Ivy League colleges combined. More than 80 percent of the University's graduates stay in New York, contributing to all aspects of the city's economic, civic and cultural life and diversifying the city's workforce in every sector. CUNY's graduates and faculty have received many prestigious honors, including 13 Nobel Prizes and 26 MacArthur "Genius" Grants. The University's historic mission continues to this day: provide a first-rate public education to all students, regardless of means or background. To learn more about CUNY, visit <https://www.cuny.edu>.

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