Dear Colleagues,

I hope your holiday season was memorable and filled with opportunities to enjoy moments that you just could not find time to schedule earlier!

2021 was a more challenging year than we anticipated and 2022 is not yet where we would like to be, but omicron is a variation on a theme we have seen before.  As a district we have demonstrated resilience, exercised an abundance of caution, and followed the science as we have navigated nearly two years of living in a world which we never envisioned.  Despite the physical, economic, and emotional tolls, we have repeatedly risen to the occasion and transformed student lives with outstanding programs and services provided by incomparable classified professionals, faculty, administrators, trustees, and volunteers.

As of January 3, we will offer our in-person classes and services as currently scheduled for winter quarter since our offerings reflect a moderate increase over fall quarter.  We continue to follow guidelines for Santa Clara County which have served us well throughout the pandemic.

The latest Order of the Health Officer of Santa Clara County was issued December 28, 2021, and expands the State Health Officer Orders for individuals in higher-risk settings.

<https://covid19.sccgov.org/december-28-2021-booster-health-order>

“D. This Order requires that *all* individuals who work in Higher-Risk Settings must be “fully vaccinated” and also obtain boosters when they become eligible. State Health Officer Orders require that many of these individuals be vaccinated (and ultimately boosted by February 1, 2022).[[1]](https://covid19.sccgov.org/december-28-2021-booster-health-order#_ftn1)  However, those State Health Officer Orders do not cover all individuals working in higher-risk settings and roles (e.g., paramedics and jail staff).  They also allow persons who obtain an exemption from vaccination from their employer to continue working in higher-risk settings where they are at high risk of becoming infected and exposing others, rather than requiring that individuals with exemptions be reassigned to lower-risk settings and roles.  This Order enhances the protection offered by the State Health Officer Orders and moves up the timeline for personnel to be Up-to-Date on their vaccination to protect highly vulnerable workers and community members from infection, serious illness, and death from COVID-19.”

The inclusion of clinics in the December 28 order means that we must require boosters of all students and employees working in the Dental Hygiene Clinic at Foothill.

Prior to the end of fall quarter, Chancellor’s Cabinet proposed no changes to our interim Vaccination Policy which will be reviewed by the Chancellor’s Advisory Council on January 14, 2022.  Given the following excerpt from the aforementioned Order, we will recommend that boosters be required by a date to be determined during winter quarter.

“B. However, initial evidence also shows that individuals who have received a booster shot increase their immunity to a level that confers more protection from all circulating SARS-CoV-2 variants, including the Omicron variant. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) now recommend that all eligible persons receive a booster shot because immunity wanes several months after completion of the initial vaccine series.”

On-campus COVID testing for students and employees will be available when the kits arrive, anticipated to be in early January.We are aware that testing has increased dramatically resulting in high demand and short supply.  More information will be forthcoming shortly from the colleges and Human Resources, including the criteria for who gets tested, e.g., on-campus exposure or Santa Clara County Department of Public Health guidance. For the most updated information, please visit the Human Resources COVID-19 Employee Information and Resources page.

<https://hr.fhda.edu/_covid-19/index.html>

Although we have yet to start winter quarter, questions have already arisen regarding spring.  We will continue to be vigilant in monitoring and following county requirements. I am confident that we can make good decisions based on available data at the times we need to act.

I look forward to seeing many of you who will be on campus in the coming weeks, and I also look forward to resuming my open office hour (OOH) on Zoom on January 12!  I feel incredibly fortunate and privileged to be part of a community that works so conscientiously to mitigate risks for students and employees by engaging in constructive behaviors.  We have a high vaccination rate, masking requirements are followed, good judgment is exercised for voluntary social distancing, and self-isolation has stemmed from an abundance of caution.  Thank you for everything you do to keep yourself and everyone around you safe!

Let me close by reminding us that, as a district, we will not be immune from the disruptions and shortfalls in services that have burdened the world.  I hope we will be role models of patience and kindness since we are highly adept at rising above the fray.

Wishing you a happy and healthy 2022,

Judy