

## **Dear GCU students and families:**

Most of you are getting ready to return to campus next week for Move-In Week and the resumption of classes on September 7. We can't wait to see everyone's smiling faces again as we gather to renew friendships and continue on our academic journey.

As you know, GCU highly recommends that students receive the COVID-19 vaccination, and we will have the FDA-approved Pfizer vaccine available in the Health and Wellness Clinic for any student who wishes to receive one. The vaccine has proved to be the most effective way to slow the pandemic and ensure we can continue to resume normal campus activities. The vast majority of positive COVID cases nationwide related to the more contagious Delta variant have been among the unvaccinated.

Neither the vaccine nor face coverings are currently mandated on campus. This is largely a reflection of the campus experience and data we collected during the spring 2021 semester when vaccines started to become available, and during summer school as the Delta Variant of COVID-19 became more prevalent. During the final six weeks of the spring semester, GCU finished with 5 or fewer active cases of COVID-19 for each of those weeks. During summer school, as the Delta variant became more prevalent, GCU averaged 1 active COVID case per week on campus – none with serious symptoms.

GCU is also different than many university environments in that its private campus is largely enclosed, lessening daily interactions with the community that exist at many institutions.

Some exceptions to the vaccine, testing and face-covering policies on campus are:

- Students who are involved in field work or clinical placements are subject to whatever health and safety regulations exist at those sites.
- Some students in programs with higher contact rates, such as NCAA athletics, may be required to undergo random COVID testing.
- Students who are symptomatic or in quarantine will be asked to take a COVID test.
- During one-on-one meetings in enclosed spaces, such as faculty office hours, it will be up to the discretion of the faculty member whether to ask students to wear face coverings (Zoom meetings also will be available).
- Face coverings are required in clinical settings on campus, such as the Health and Wellness Clinic, and in nursing laboratory environments where face coverings and shields are used in order to replicate real-world health settings in which those are utilized.

As student leaders and others have begun returning to campus this month for training and other activities to get ready for the fall semester, we are experiencing positive coronavirus cases on campus, which is expected. It is inevitable that COVID-19 will be present on campus to some extent, just as it is in any community setting in Arizona. But it is a good reminder that everyone must remain diligent about COVID-19 protocols on and off campus. That means washing and sanitizing your hands often, participating in testing and contact tracing as necessary, performing daily wellness checks and staying home if you feel ill.

Also, please be sensitive to the fact that the topic of COVID-19 vaccines and protocols is a polarizing issue in the U.S., with strong opinions on both sides. You will be meeting and interacting with people on campus who may have different views on these matters. But – as with any topic – we can be a blessing to one another, respecting others' views and engaging in civil and thoughtful discourse as a Christian community. It will take each of us continuing our tradition of acting responsibly and compassionately toward each other for this to be another successful semester.

As of this morning, there are 7 active COVID cases on campus. All have been placed in isolation while being cared for, and none are experiencing serious symptoms.

More information, updates and FAQs about the coronavirus can be found on the GCU [COVID information page](#).