



**South Carolina**

COVID-19

RETURN TO WORK PLAN

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## Introduction

**The University of South Carolina (UofSC) will execute a plan for faculty, staff and student employees (collectively, employees) to return to work on the UofSC Columbia campus in a phased-in manner over the summer months in order to prepare for the campus to be fully open and operational at the beginning of the fall semester.** This phased-in return to campus is a conditions-based, four-phase plan designed to safely and deliberately return our employees to the workplace. The phases were developed based on the current guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), the State of South Carolina and other best practices to support the successful reopening of our campus community. As knowledge and understanding of the coronavirus (COVID-19) continue to evolve in the coming weeks, institutional plans and guidance will be updated as appropriate.

**The purpose of this document** is to provide broad institutional and operational-level guidance and to empower senior leadership on the UofSC Columbia campus to build unit-level plans that will enable the safe return of employees to campus and ensure the efficient conduct of academics, research, extra-curricular activities and intercollegiate athletics when students return to campus for the start of the 2020 academic year. **The success of our efforts to reopen our campus depends on the commitment of each employee to exercise common sense and good judgment** and to comply with the guidance and directives contained in this document.

Our plan to phase in the return of employees to campus is carefully **designed in alignment with the core principles** that have guided our decisions throughout the COVID-19 crisis:

- To ensure the health, safety and welfare of faculty, staff and students in the campus community
- To mitigate the risk of resurgence of COVID-19
- To maintain academic and research excellence
- To sustain university operations and prepare the institution for the return of students

Additionally, our plan is **mindful of the need to protect vulnerable and high-risk individuals** on campus including:

- those with underlying health conditions such as heart disease, asthma, and diabetes,
- those who are immunocompromised as a result of cancer treatments or bone marrow transplantation,
- those who are 65 years of age or older, and
- those who have routine contact with any vulnerable or high risk individual such as individuals with underlying health conditions, individuals who are over the age of 65 living in their home, or individuals who are caring for someone outside their household who is in these categories.

Through this plan, the university seeks to:

- **ensure the capability to test the maximum** number of faculty, staff and students upon return to campus,
- **provide the university the greatest degree of contact-tracing capability**, through process and application,
- **provide the university the needed capacity to isolate and/or quarantine students** who test positive or are presumptive positive for the coronavirus and maximize our capability to contain any incidents or spread of COVID-19,
- **enable our ability to review and enhance** our health-care related processes, procedures and responses, and
- **gradually enhance our capability to care** for our faculty, staff and students, protect our community and contain the spread of COVID-19.

## Return-to-Work Plan

The four phases of our return-to-work plan are described below. It is anticipated that implementation of each phase will require approximately 2-3 weeks (based on current institutional and public health guidance). At each stage of the plan, the university will be guided by the following conditions:

- The number and rate of COVID-19 cases on campus
- Health monitoring policy is in place with the capability to screen for active disease daily (this includes temperature checks and screening for cough, shortness of breath, loss of smell and taste, sore throat, runny nose, nausea) \*Please see the health monitoring form attached to this document
- Testing, contact tracing, quarantine and isolation capabilities are established on campus, to include exposure protocols
- Environmental controls are in place to include the availability of personal protection equipment (PPE) and cleaning services to support the needs of faculty, staff and students, and campus operations, and reduce the spread of COVID-19
- The health care system can support the number of cases and acuity of health issues
- The university's infrastructure and the number of faculty and staff returning to the on-campus workforce supports the return of students

If conditions during the summer change significantly or there is a resurgence of COVID-19 cases, the university will provide further guidance on institutional decisions and measures to be taken regarding the return of employees and students to campus.

It is important in each phase that *adequate training be implemented* for employees and *departmental/unit contacts be identified* to ensure smooth and efficient institutional operations as the semester begins and to reduce the anxiety of faculty, staff and students returning to campus. Prior to June 1, each department/unit **will appoint and train a “deployment team”** composed of a human resources, business, communications and facilities point-of-contact. The

team will be responsible for answering questions and serving as the primary contact for communications within the department/unit and for determining the needs of the department/unit as the phase-in plan progresses. The university will make each department/unit aware of additional training and education opportunities in the next two weeks and will continue to provide updates throughout the summer.

Employees must be provided clear guidelines and frequent reminders that if they have symptoms of COVID-19, cold/flu-like symptoms or other illness, they are to stay home, contact their supervisor and seek medical attention as appropriate. Further, an appropriate respiratory (face-coverings) and hand-hygiene program must be implemented and maintained with appropriate signage, supplies and support systems. The COVID-19 line (803-576-8511) should be communicated to each contact person as well as to faculty, staff and students. This line provides a resource for all members of the university community to ask questions regarding symptoms of COVID-19, contact tracing, and quarantine and isolation protocols. A list of resources is included in this document on page 7.

### **1. Phase 1 (Initial Return). Implementation Period: June 1 to June 21.**

During Phase I, departments/units will bring not more than 30% of their workforce back to campus. Only employees deemed essential to support academic, research and extra-curricular activities should be scheduled to return to campus during this time period. A gradual approach to resuming increased research activities will also be implemented using additional research-specific guidelines. The university will use Phase I to test the institution's ability to exercise systems and procedures, care for our workers, and protect our community. Departments/units will use Phase I to learn and make adjustments as necessary in preparation for the beginning of the fall semester.

Returning to normal functions should not be the focus of Phase 1. Employees should return in a limited capacity to support institutional operations, research and teaching activities, student support services, athletics and the needs of the returning students, faculty, and staff.

Employees who are high-risk and vulnerable should not return during Phase 1 and should remain working remotely. Employees that can effectively work from home and whose presence is not required to support the return of students and university functions should also continue working from home. Adjusting work schedules, limiting the number of people in the workplace, alternating workdays for employees, adjusting start and end times for employees, and adjusting entry and exit points in the workplace should all be considered and will help ensure flexibility and social distancing. If childcare availability is limited and/or K-12 schools are closed, departments are encouraged to work with faculty, staff and students and provide flexible scheduling as duties permit.

Policies and practices for health monitoring, COVID-19 prevention strategies, social distancing, training and education, and signage must be in place prior to the return of these employees.

Offices, workspaces and/or classrooms should be adjusted, if possible, to meet the 6-foot social distancing requirement. Additional measures should be considered to prevent COVID-19, including but not limited to:

- Health care monitoring of employees to ensure individuals do not come to work sick
- Face coverings are highly recommended in areas where 6 feet social distancing cannot be consistently achieved, and will be required in designated areas on campus; employees should be made aware of these requirements and the requirements will be posted on the UofSC COVID-19 website
- Restricting or prohibiting non-essential visitors
- Utilizing video or phone conferencing instead of face-to-face meetings
- Workplace modifications:
  - reducing the number of workstations or staggering schedules/days of the week
  - placing plexiglass or other barriers that would limit the connection to other workstations or in areas such as check-in stations, customer service greeting areas etc.
  - reducing the number of chairs in waiting areas and classrooms
  - reassessing flow patterns throughout the building to allow for reduced contact and discourage congregation
  - increase ventilation air exchanges, if feasible
  - foot openers or propping doors open should be considered to avoid high-touch surfaces
- Ensuring signage to encourage social distancing, hand washing, etc.
- Providing hand and respiratory hygiene products
- Working with the building manager and/or maintenance and housekeeping staff to ensure appropriate cleaning and sanitizing of the workplace, office, classroom etc.
- Restricting and/or prohibiting nonessential, university-related travel
- If vehicle travel is necessary, minimize number of occupants in the vehicle is highly recommended

If the conditions are met, continuation to Phase 2 should be considered after a period of two to three weeks.

## **2. Phase 2 (Second Group). Implementation Period: June 22 through July 13.**

During Phase 2, departments/units will bring not more than an additional 30% of their workforce back to campus (total employees should not exceed approximately 60% of the workforce) for the purpose of increasing operational capacity and support activities on campus. Although a complete/full return to normal campus operations are not anticipated during Phase 2, departments/units should enhance preparations for the return of students for the fall semester. All guidelines and requirements established for Phase 1 above continue to apply and must be implemented by departments/units. If all conditions are met, continuation to Phase 3 should be considered after a period of 2 – 3 weeks.

## **3. Phase 3 (Final Group). Implementation Period: July 14 through August 3.**

During Phase 3, the remaining workforce (excluding employees who have been authorized or directed to continue to work from home) will be returned to campus to conduct final preparations for the 2020 academic year and the full return of our students. All guidelines and requirements established for Phase 1 above continue to apply and must be implemented by departments/units.

If all conditions are met, continuation to Phase 4 should be considered after a period of 2 – 3 weeks.

#### **4. Phase 4 (Academic Year). Implementation Period: August 3 to end of Academic Year.**

Phase 4 will introduce the start of the 2020 academic year and the return to campus full operations with appropriate and ongoing mitigation strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19. All guidelines and requirements established in Phase 1 above continue to apply and must continue to be implemented by departments/units. The university will closely supervise all aspects of campus operations to ensure the maximum participation of employees and students in socially responsible behavior throughout the university community, the use of personal protective equipment and compliance with measures consistent with local, state and federal guidelines, and the commitment to the highest level of excellence in education, research and extra-curricular activities.

#### **Purchasing, Custodial & Janitorial, and Supporting Operations Information**

The university has been preparing for the return of employees and students to the campus based upon the phased-in approach taking into consideration the intent and directions from regulatory and health authorities and the parameters established by physical distancing limitations. As stated previously, there will be designated contacts and or communication processes and procedures to obtain the supplies and or items that you will need associated with return to work and instruction. This information will continue to be directed to unit's business managers or other appropriate contacts.

The university has the following information and guidance for your consideration:

- General ordering and procurement of general support pandemic supplies have and are being handled by the Procurement/Purchasing Department working in conjunction with Facilities Services, Environmental Health & Safety, and others for coordination and distribution.
- For general supplies and items like face coverings and hand sanitizer, these are being purchased and received through Procurement/Purchasing and will be requisitioned, at cost, back to academic units or operations; this action is consistent with prior natural disasters or supply ordering and best enables the delivery of large quantities at the best price to the University. Amounts disbursed will be based upon number of employees and other factors.
- Containers that will be filled with supplies for classrooms will be prepared and delivered to locations by the Procurement and facilities Services based upon the phase in approach to enable faculty and students the opportunity and access to wipes and other materials to self-protect and clean their class space in addition to the increased custodial care.
- For the larger dollar items such as the increased janitorial and custodial services, these costs will be allocated, as normal with existing cleaning costs, as a part of the existing budget model allocation and reduced by any available funds received from the Federal Government or other organizations.

- Custodial and janitorial operations have been increasing numbers daily and will continue to increase numbers from third party services. Their current focus will be upon regular service with increases to the initial phased-in approach for employees and students in early June such as Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, Russell House, Thomas Cooper Library.
- Procurement has obtained adequate disposable face coverings and masks for the initial phased-in needs, and with the expectations that the large orders to enable all faculty, staff and students for the entire system to start with one washable and reusable face covering are to be received by the end of May or early June, with additional orders in tranches thereafter; note this is straight from the manufacturer purchases.
- Facilities Services, Facilities Planning Design and Construction, Student Affairs, Dining and other groups have already been working with Aramark and others on necessary food services changes due to the pandemic, best locations for outside tables and chairs, and establishing expectations and protocols with more information and visible physical signage based upon the phased-in approach.
- Postal services have gone uninterrupted this Spring and Summer and has developed a phased- in approach to continue to support students, faculty and staff. Information will be updated and placed on the Postal Services webpage, as appropriate.
- Parking and Transportation has enacted and will continue to enact changes that focused on meeting the federal guidelines and any other regulations or industry standard for safe travel. Information will be updated and placed on the Parking Services webpage, as appropriate.

The university will continue to work with operating units to address issues related to the pandemic and any new guidance and or actions necessary to ensure a safe environment.

The university will continue to monitor COVID-19 trends in South Carolina and nationally and will update its guidance as circumstances warrant.

### Appendices: (to be published):

- Health Monitoring Guidance
- Research Return Guidance
- Athletics Return Guidance

### Resources

- COVID-19 Questions and Answers (803-576-8511)
- University of South Carolina COVID-19 Website (<https://sc.edu/safety/coronavirus/>)
- Department of Environmental Health and Environmental Control (<https://www.scdhec.gov/infectious-diseases/viruses/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>)