



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

UHD President, Loren J. Blanchard

Dear Students, Faculty & Staff,

I trust that each of you are in good health and spirit.

We recently returned from Spring Break with face-to-face, hybrid, and online interactive classes coming back to campus. This return comes as a rapidly growing number of Houstonians are receiving access to the vaccines. As conditions continue to improve, the University will gradually increase the amount of instruction delivered on-campus and safely restore on-campus operations.



UHD is currently at Step 2-Orange on its [Response Matrix](#). After reviewing COVID data reported by state officials and public health organizations, it has been determined that the University can safely move to **Step 3-Yellow on June 1** and to **Step 4-Green on July 12**.

The introduction and distribution of multiple, highly effective vaccines enable society to transition back toward normalcy. More than 3 million Texans are now fully vaccinated, with another 6.84 million having received their first dose. These numbers are encouraging, as is the recent news that starting March 29, [all adults in our state will be eligible to receive vaccinations](#).

As we transition to Step 3-Yellow on June 1, full-time staff members will return to working on campus for at least three days per week. Mask requirements, distancing protocols, and other safety measures will remain in place, and all entrances to UHD's campus will reopen. Signing in at specific access points will no longer be required starting on this date.

On July 12, full-time employees will come back to campus and return to their pre-COVID work schedules. Classes will transition back to traditional modalities starting in the fall semester with an increased number of face-to-face sections, complemented by hybrid and online sections. It is anticipated that at least 60 percent of classes will be face-to-face or hybrid for the fall semester. By this date, public health officials expect that COVID-19 infection rates will have declined further as more Houstonians are vaccinated. However, we will continue to closely monitor local COVID-19 conditions and if there is a need to pivot back to primarily virtual instruction and support services for the Fall 2021 semester, we will notify you accordingly in a timely manner and ask that you be prepared to comply.

As UHD moves to its next steps on its Response Matrix, safety remains the top priority. While the vaccine and a reduced number of cases have brought a sense of optimism, we will not let our guard down. Everyone will be expected to do their part to ensure our campus remains a safe place to learn and work including wearing masks and face coverings, avoiding large gatherings, maintaining appropriate distances from others and regular washing of hands.

I also recommend that you register for the vaccination waitlist if you have not done so already. You can sign up on the [Harris County Public Health](#) website and learn more about the vaccine and local vaccination sites from the [City of Houston's Emergency Operations Center](#). More information is also available on the [University's COVID-19 Website](#).

Additional information will be available soon regarding UHD moving to Steps 3 and 4 this summer. UHD's COVID-19 Response Taskforce and Office of Emergency Management will continue to monitor conditions within the community and review data from regional health officials.

This month marks one year since students, faculty, and staff departed campus to work and study from the safety of their homes. If we have learned anything during this experience, it's that Gators can accomplish great things when working together. Let's continue the teamwork and collaboration that kept UHD strong during the height of the pandemic to prepare for a safe return to our campus this summer.

Sincerely,

Loren J. Blanchard, Ph.D.
President, University of Houston-Downtown