



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Florida Tech's Pandemic Response Team, working collaboratively across campus units, developed Return-to-Learn recommendations to facilitate the university's safe and efficient return to campus-based living and learning. Operations across campus—from the student experience to the work environment for faculty and staff—were evaluated for risk, assessed for opportunities and challenges and modified to ensure the health and safety of all Panthers. Central to this work was the development of the Florida Tech Safe initiative, an evaluation of the university's safety culture, establishment of a safety pledge and implementation of policies and procedures to mitigate the risk posed by COVID-19. The Florida Tech Safe Plan has been modified and updated to adapt to the many changes and challenges that the COVID-19 variants have posed as well as incorporating the information and experience that we have gained over these many months of the pandemic.

## OUR PLEDGE: SAFE STUDENTS—SAFE CAMPUS—SAFE COMMUNITY

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We look forward to providing our student body with a traditional campus experience in the spring. Having the vast majority of the Florida Tech community vaccinated against COVID-19 will be one of the keys to allowing an increase in activities on campus. Our pledge for safe students, safe campus and safe community remains. We will continue to carefully monitor public health conditions and maintain regular communication with health officials.

Although we hope it won't be necessary, we have the experience and capacity to rapidly pivot to remote or hybrid instruction if necessary. Florida Tech's plan aligns with local orders and ordinances of the city of Melbourne and Brevard County, as well as the state of Florida. It also follows recommendations from the federal government, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Florida Tech's Holzer Health Center.



**We are in this together.**

# FLORIDA TECH SAFE PLEDGE

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Being a part of the Panther family means that each of us must take extraordinary steps to stay well and persistently protect each other. Therefore, I will take responsibility for my own health and help keep the Florida Tech community safe by stopping the spread of COVID-19 and other infections as identified and instructed by the university.

## I PLEDGE TO:

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### 1 Protect Myself

Monitor for the symptoms of COVID-19 and report to a medical professional if I experience fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, dry cough, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat or loss of taste or smell.

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Wash my hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.

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Get vaccinated and/or continue to wear face coverings in accordance with university health and safety guidelines.

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### 2 Protect Others

Stay home if I feel ill.

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Wear an appropriate face mask and other protective gear as directed by the university.

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Be positive, sensitive and helpful to anyone around who may be troubled or struggling.

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### 3 Protect our Community

Get vaccinated and/or continue to wear face coverings in accordance with university health and safety guidelines.

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Report close contact exposure or positive test to the COVID-19 case manager and follow quarantine/isolation protocols.

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Adhere to all university quarantine and isolation regulations if identified as a close contact or testing positive.

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# COVID-19 POLICIES UPDATE

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As we approach the start of the spring semester, we have seen the rise of the Omicron variant that, although highly contagious, has less severe and, in many cases, even mild “cold-like” symptoms. The Pandemic Response Team has recommended that Florida Tech stay the course with in-person instruction and continue to maintain many COVID protocols to mitigate spread while adjusting to this new variant.

The decision to return to in-person instruction on Jan. 10 is based on many factors, including the lower health risk of the Omicron variant coupled with the widespread availability of vaccines. The great majority of our faculty and staff are now vaccinated as is a large percentage of our student body who have reported their vaccination status. Being vaccinated is now a conscious choice and although being vaccinated does not guarantee immunity from infection, evidence shows that it does diminish the severity of contracting a severe case of COVID-19. We also know that there is no substitute for an in-person campus experience, and all academic policies will remain in full effect during the academic year.

We reached this decision after careful planning and consultation with our health care and operational professionals to ensure that we can return to a healthy campus with appropriate safety precautions while also having the flexibility to implement new guidelines as necessary. As such, we will continue to follow CDC guidelines and our existing rules (modified as appropriate) based on those guidelines and advice from our own medical professionals and public health experts.

Strong evidence indicates that most severe illness and hospitalizations are occurring in our unvaccinated population. Although being vaccinated does not guarantee immunity from infection, it does remain the best defense against contracting a severe case of COVID-19. For this reason, Florida Tech continues to strongly recommend that our students, faculty and staff get vaccinated and receive their boosters.

## In the Classroom

Florida Tech will conduct a full schedule of in-person instruction this spring. There will not be a remote option for courses scheduled to meet in person except for those who receive a special exemption from their college dean. Students in isolation and quarantine will be expected to coordinate with instructors to make up work. Courses will continue to be recorded and made available throughout the semester and will be deleted once the course is completed.

## Academic Calendar

The first day of the spring term is Jan. 10, 2022. The academic calendar will reflect traditional breaks.

## Guest Policy

For the safety of our campus community, public access to the campus will remain restricted, and Florida Tech will continue to require university guests to check in at the Welcome Center or at the Office of Enrollment Management (for campus tours). For safety and security, visitors will be required to display their university-provided visitor pass. Faculty and staff will continue to display their campus-issued ID at all times when on campus.

## Campus Dining

Panther Dining Hall, the Rathskeller and the newly added dining options in the Denius Student Center will be open for our campus community. Restrictions for employees and a to-go only option may be imposed depending on advice from our Pandemic Response Team. Limited seating capacity will remain in effect.

## Travel

Any individual or group participating in university-related travel will need approval and may require a negative COVID-19 test pre- and post-travel or a completed vaccination.

## Events

Given the effectiveness of our mitigation strategies and the prioritization of in-person interactions, workplace events and meetings are permitted. Attendees must comply with all protocols, and rooms must be booked in advance through Florida Tech's Event Management System.

Florida Tech is committed to the health, safety and welfare of every member of the Panther community. Large university events and student events (more than 50 people) will require approval and will be reviewed on an individual basis. Workplace meetings, organization and club meetings are permitted as long as they adhere to university safety protocols. The holding of events or meetings outside are highly encouraged whenever feasible.

## Isolation and Quarantine

Students will isolate and/or quarantine in their place of residence and will be required to adhere to guidance and protocols provided by the COVID-19 case management team.

If you do not adhere to the isolation protocols and procedures, you may be referred to the dean of students and/or removed from campus. Contact tracing will continue, and students will be required to follow quarantine protocols if identified as a close contact unless fully vaccinated.

## COVID-19 Vaccination

Florida Tech expects that everyone who is able to receive the COVID-19 vaccination will be vaccinated to protect themselves, their families and the community. Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 prevents severe illness, hospitalization and death and reduces transmission. Boosters are highly encouraged for those who are outside of six months of receiving their Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, and outside of two months of receiving their J&J vaccine. With the new variant, this is more urgent than ever!

Any employee who is not fully vaccinated will be required to provide a negative COVID-19 test within a 10-day period throughout the spring semester.

### WHY GET VACCINATED?

Once you are fully vaccinated, you ...

- do not need to quarantine if exposed to someone positive for COVID-19 (if you have no symptoms).
- do not need to quarantine upon returning to the U.S. after travel.
- will enable Florida Tech to open up more and more options!

### WHY SHOULD YOU GET BOOSTED?

The CDC states that studies show after getting vaccinated against COVID-19 protection decreases over time and may also be decreased due to changes in circulating variants. The recent emergence of the Omicron variant further increases the importance of vaccination and boosters to protect against COVID-19.

Infections happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated. However, preliminary evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people who do become infected with the various variants can spread the virus to others. To reduce their risk of becoming infected with a COVID-19 variant and potentially spreading it to others, vaccinated members of our campus community need to continue to adhere to our Florida Tech Safe protocols.

## Face Covering Policy

The following guidance is provided in order to ensure clarity for all our campus community:

### **MASKS ARE REQUIRED IN ALL INDOOR GATHERINGS OR GROUP MEETINGS, REGARDLESS OF VACCINATION STATUS.**

A reminder that masks are, and have been, required at Florida Tech with the following exceptions:

- Outside, when you are eating or when you are by yourself in your residential room, apartment or office.

Not required:

- Inside your own residence hall room (alone and with door closed)
- Inside your individual, non-shared office (alone and with door closed)
- Outside (we still strongly encourage social distancing)

Required in:

- All classrooms
- All shared offices
- All indoor events, common areas and shared offices

## Symptom Monitoring

Florida Tech will again be using the Campus Clear app for daily health screening. If you are cleared for campus access by Campus Clear, you will receive a green “Good to Go” certificate via the app, and you may be asked to show this certificate upon your arrival on campus, when you engage in group activities with others or when you access certain buildings on campus.

If you are not cleared for campus access, you will receive a red “NOT CLEARED for campus access” certificate via the app, and you will be provided with instructions. If you have tested positive or have been in close contact with a positive individual, you must contact Human Resources to provide further guidance, which may include suggesting that you consult with a health care provider and/or scheduling a COVID-19 test.

### **PLEASE PAY ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING PROTOCOLS:**

#### **IF YOU HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 AND ARE EXPERIENCING SYMPTOMS, YOU MAY NOT RETURN TO CAMPUS UNTIL:**

- At least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, and
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication

#### **IF YOU HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 BUT HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED SYMPTOMS, YOU MAY NOT RETURN TO CAMPUS UNTIL:**

- 5 days have passed since your test

#### **IF YOU HAVE BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT (WITHIN 6 FEET OF SOMEONE FOR A CUMULATIVE TOTAL OF 15 MINUTES OR MORE OVER A 24-HOUR PERIOD) WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 AND YOU HAVE NOT BEEN FULLY VACCINATED, YOU MAY NOT RETURN TO CAMPUS UNTIL:**

- 5 days have passed since you were last exposed (if no COVID-19 test is taken)
- 5 days have passed (must have negative COVID-19 test result)

#### **IF YOU HAVE BEEN IN CLOSE CONTACT (WITHIN 6 FEET OF SOMEONE FOR A CUMULATIVE TOTAL OF 15 MINUTES OR MORE OVER A 24-HOUR PERIOD) WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 AND YOU HAVE BEEN FULLY VACCINATED:**

- You do not need to quarantine.
- Wear a mask around others and monitor for symptoms for 5 days.
- If symptoms develop, it is recommended to get tested.

#### IN THE EVENT YOU HAVE ONE OR MORE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19:

- Stay home.
- Employee: Notify and consult with HR about using PTO or work-from-home arrangements.
- Consult with a health care provider and/or scheduling a COVID-19 test.

Occasionally, an employee may not follow protocols exactly as prescribed. It is the duty of all supervisors to be fully versed in our COVID-19 protocols and to contact HR in any instance where an employee notifies them of feeling ill or shares the result of a positive test.

## Questions

We encourage all faculty, staff and students to refamiliarize yourself our Florida Tech Safe website. The curated list of FAQ provides an overview of our protocols and is an excellent resource.

### [FLORIDATECH.EDU/CORONAVIRUS/QUESTIONS-AND-ANSWERS](https://floridatech.edu/coronavirus/questions-and-answers)

If faculty and staff have questions or concerns about COVID-19 protocols related to the workplace, please contact the Office of Human Resources. Students should contact the Office of the Dean of Students.



#### **Pandemic Response Team**

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