



Dear BUA Families,

Thank you to all of you who joined us for Sunday evening's COVID Town Hall meeting with our Parent Health Advisory Team. You can find the recording on the [secure parent portal](#).

I'm writing to share a few updates from that meeting.

Booster Requirement

Recently, Boston University President Robert Brown [announced](#) that BU will require all members of its community who are eligible to receive a COVID-19 booster shot to demonstrate that they have done so by February 4 or as soon as their eligibility allows. This decision is based on the judgment that vaccination continues to be a critical defense against waning immunity and the threat of new variants. The CDC has approved the Pfizer-BioNTech booster vaccine for individuals 16 years of age and older and has found that mix-and-match boosters are safe and effective. You can find the [CDC's complete guidance on boosters here](#).

Following the University's protocol, and in line with the advice from BU's health professionals and BUA's Parent Health Advisory Team, **BUA will require boosters for all individuals 16 years of age and older as soon as their eligibility allows**. Given that booster eligibility begins 6 months after completing the primary vaccination series, we anticipate that many of our students will begin receiving boosters in February or in early spring, likely after the February 4 target set by the University. We understand that and simply ask that students upload evidence of booster vaccinations when they can.

As we do for other required vaccinations, we will accommodate medical and religious exemptions to this policy. Faculty and staff will be subject to the same requirement.

Uploading Proof of Booster

To upload proof of booster vaccination to BU Patient Connect, **students** should:

- Visit Healthway (www.bu.edu/healthway) > Students, and log in to Patient Connect using their BU username and password
- Click the Medical Clearances menu option, then click Update in the COVID clearance row
- Click Upload to upload an image of their COVID-19 vaccine documentation, ensuring that the administered dates are clearly visible
- Enter booster appointment date, indicate the vaccine manufacturer, and click Done
- To file an exemption request for medical or religious reasons through Patient Connect, choose Request for COVID-19 Vaccine Exemption from the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) message options. Healthway > Students > Messages > New Message > COVID-19 (Coronavirus) > COVID-19 Vaccine Exemption
- More details are available [here](#).

For proof of primary vaccination, we also asked parents/guardians to upload documents into SchoolDoc. That additional step is not required for proof of boosters.

Eliminating Daily Attestations

This week, BU Chief Health Officer Judy Platt [announced](#) that, beginning January 12, BU's **daily symptom attestation will be eliminated**. In its place, regular emails will be sent to all faculty, staff, and students reminding them of the possible symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do should they experience symptoms. BUA will do the same. We are comfortable removing this daily ritual, confident that students have internalized the message that it is **critical to stay home when sick** and in the other overlapping protective measures currently in place: vaccination, masking, and testing.

What to Do if Symptomatic

If a student is experiencing symptoms, we ask that:

- the student stay home
- the family contact the front desk to report the absence by 8:00 a.m. by calling 617-353-9000 or emailing academy@bu.edu
- the student or family call Healthway (617-353-0550) to discuss symptoms, testing, and other next steps with a nurse or the student directly schedule a COVID test at the symptomatic testing center (see below) and not return to school until receiving a negative test result

Symptomatic students now have the option to directly schedule same-day tests – without talking to Healthway first – at the symptomatic testing center in the [Health Services Annex](#). They schedule those tests using the same portal they use to schedule asymptomatic tests. Symptomatic test results are generally returned the same day.

On days when students are out for any COVID-related reasons, we are happy to set up the technology to allow that student – if they are feeling well enough – to follow along in their BUA courses by Zoom, as long as the front desk is notified by 8:00 a.m. As always, teachers will be flexible with students who miss classes and will make time to work with those students outside of class.

Maintaining Masking Requirement

BUA continues to follow BU's guidance on masking. The **indoor mask mandate remains in place**.

Guidance for Winter Break

BUA winter break runs from Monday, December 20 through Tuesday, January 4. BUA classes will resume on Wednesday, January 5.

BU testing collection sites will be closed from Wednesday, December 22-Sunday, January 2, with some [limited collection hours](#) offered on December 28 and December 30; all collection sites resume their normal hours of operation on Monday, January 3.

We know that many of you are looking forward to spending time with family during the upcoming break; we all need that after a challenging semester. We know that gatherings potentially bring

higher risks of exposure. **We strongly recommend that students schedule a COVID test for Monday, January 3 or Tuesday, January 4, before classes resume. If that is not possible, students must schedule a test for Wednesday, January 5.**

Mental Health

I feel for and worry about our students. They have done – and continue to do – everything we have asked of them to keep our community physically healthy and learning in person. But many of them are tired. The pandemic's long duration has tested our patience. So has the constantly shifting horizon. Many of us thought we would return to normal in the late spring of 2020, then the fall of 2020, then again in the fall of 2021 -- only to be disappointed each time by the epidemiological realities. This year is better than the last. But not knowing when we might fully return to normal takes a toll, particularly on student mental health.

As a school, we have to be proactive in the face of the mental health challenges. Later this winter, **we will host [Dr. Lisa Damour](#) for virtual talks with our students, faculty/staff, and parents.** Dr. Damour is a world-renowned clinical psychologist and author focused on the emotional lives of young people. She will offer strategies for emotional regulation and speak to the experience our students are living through. In February, our **students will also be participating in the Independent School Health Check (ISHC).** This is a national survey for middle and high school students. Soon after the survey, we will receive a report with a school-specific analysis benchmarked against peer schools in areas including nutrition, sleep, internet use/misuse, academic pressure, and social life. Our aim is to use this information to make data-driven decisions about how best to support our community.

When we ask students what they need most, they talk about fun with one another. The students on Student Council, among others, have done great work organizing rally points. The indoor/outdoor dance in November was a highlight of the semester, as was the faculty-student dodgeball tournament. On Monday, we hosted Brunch on the (BU) Beach, and we are planning a community skate when we return from break in January. As the accumulated strain of the pandemic piles up, it is critical that we keep finding ways to let kids be kids and that we are smart about balancing concerns about physical safety with mental health concerns. The good news is that BU's testing program and our students' remarkable record of compliance allow us the freedom to "take good risks."

We encourage families to seek out similar outlets for COVID-smart socialization. Parents have offered some wonderful suggestions for activities, including masked movie nights and group hikes. Thank you for being such a wonderful resource to one another.

As always, please feel free to [reach out to us](#) with any questions. We are grateful for your ongoing partnership and support, and wish you and your families a restful break and a happy, healthy New Year.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Christopher Kolovos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Christopher" and last name "Kolovos" clearly legible.

Chris Kolovos
Head of School