



3/15/22

Dear BUA students and families,

From the start of the pandemic, we have taken our cues from the data. When there were spikes, like with delta and omicron, that approach led to tighter policies designed to reduce transmission and keep us learning in person. But being data-driven goes in both directions. Rates are at the lowest point in many months. Our population is fully vaccinated and boosted, and we continue to have access to regular, high-quality testing at BUA. We are also mindful of the mental health impact of our now years-long struggle with COVID, particularly on the young people in our care. They have done their job beautifully.

I'm writing to share some pieces of COVID-related news, including our plans to ease several health and safety measures – some immediately and some in early April after we have fully reintegrated all of our students after spring break. In consultation with our BUA-parent Health Advisory Team and our colleagues at BU, we have the following steps in mind. As always, things may change, and we will stay flexible. But for now, these feel like the right decisions for our community.

Test before Returning from Spring Break

Many of our students are already back on campus for BU courses; they should follow the typical twice-weekly testing cadence.

For all students who return to campus for the first time when BUA classes resume on Monday, March 21, we ask them to **take a COVID test at BUA, if possible, between Thursday, March 17 and Sunday, March 20** so that they can have a negative result prior to returning to BUA classes. Students who cannot come to campus for a test on those days must schedule an on-campus test for Monday, March 21.

Keeping Twice-Weekly Testing in Place

The combination of testing and vaccination is at the heart of our success in preventing community spread. We intend to keep the twice-weekly testing cadence in place for the time being (to be revisited later this spring), particularly given our intention to ease several other protocols in the coming days and weeks.

Moving All-School Meetings Back to the GSU Auditorium

We have held our weekly all-school meetings this year in Morse Auditorium, rather than our traditional space: the GSU Auditorium. Our decision to shift to Morse was driven by the fact that it is larger, giving us the ability to create more space between students. Starting on March 22, we will move all-school meetings back to the GSU auditorium, which is considerably closer to BUA and a more intimate environment for us to be together.

Opening the GSU Academy Room to 10th Graders for Lunch

Since last fall, we have asked 9th and 10th to eat lunch in the gym or in designated outdoor spaces in light of spacing and airflow concerns. After spring break, 10th graders will also be permitted to eat in the Academy Room at the GSU. The room is reserved for BUA students every day during lunch. 9th graders should continue to use the gym and designated outdoor spaces.

Eating in Classrooms for Club Meetings

If students are in a club meeting in a classroom during lunch, they are welcome to eat in that space, with the permission of the faculty club advisor and the classroom teacher.

Revisiting the Mask Mandate in Early April

BU recently [announced](#) that, beginning on March 7, it would remove the mask mandate in some spaces, but keep that mandate in place in classrooms, shuttles, and healthcare facilities. It also shared that it would revisit the classroom mask mandate and likely remove that mandate in early April.

At BUA, we will **keep the BUA mask mandate in place in all BUA spaces until Wednesday, April 6, with the intention of moving to a mask-optional policy on April 6 in most BUA settings, assuming conditions support that change.** Keeping the mask mandate in place for the next several weeks will allow us to fully integrate students returning from break and monitor conditions carefully before making this shift. When and if BUA moves to a mask-optional approach this spring, we will still likely require masks for large gatherings (e.g. all-school meetings, class meetings) and for other events on a case-by-case basis. And, of course, students, faculty, and staff are more than welcome to wear masks in any setting; it is important that we all feel comfortable taking the precautions that feel right for ourselves and our families.

Community Moments

We continue to prioritize chances for students to be together in person outside the classroom. Right before break, we all enjoyed a spirited student-faculty basketball game. In the next few weeks, students will take part in a Black history walking tour of Boston (3/25), a Stargazing

event (4/1), and a trivia night (4/1). Our whole community is invited to our Be Together event (4/8) for some good food and fun. Later in the spring, our artists will have even more chances to shine, with the senior play (3/25-3/27), spring concert (5/6), spring musical (5/27-5/29), and senior visual arts reception (date TBD). Planning is well underway for prom (5/21) and a post-prom slumber party hosted at BUA open to all juniors and seniors. And we are lining up a fun slate of events for the Class of 2022 during senior week (5/16-5/20). Please keep an eye on News and Notes and your inboxes for details about these events and more.

You can find more details about BUA COVID protocols on this [page](#).

While we are all affected by COVID, the experience is not the same for everyone. Some of you will likely read the steps above and feel like they are long overdue. Some may feel like it is too much too fast. Wherever you and your family are, we encourage you to reach out with questions and concerns at academy@bu.edu. We are here for you and eager to listen.

Thank you for your continued support, partnership, and trust.

Warmly,

Chris Kolovos