

4/5/22

Dear BUA students and families,

I hope this note finds you well as the weather warms up and as we enter the final months of the school year.

In mid-March, we [shared](#) that we would monitor the COVID situation after spring break and make a determination about whether to shift to a mask-optional policy in early April. I'm writing now to let you know that on the recommendation of our parent Health Advisory Team, with the support of our partners at Boston University, and in line with guidance from the state public health authorities and the CDC, BUA will go mask-optional beginning on Wednesday (tomorrow). You'll find details about this change and several other policy updates below.

### **Mask Optional Starting Wednesday, 4/6**

Beginning on Wednesday, April 6, BUA will move to a mask-optional policy for all BUA spaces, with the exception, for the time being, of all-school meetings and other settings where we determine that masks should be worn. BUA teachers will also have discretion in their classes and other meetings with students to require masks; we know our students will respect the desire of some of the adults in this community to take extra precautions. Our students in BU classes are also subject to the University's continued masking requirement in BU classrooms.

Mask optional at BUA means just that. Many of our students, faculty, and staff will choose to continue to wear masks. They should feel comfortable doing so, and we will work together as a community to respect the choices individuals make – in the best BUA tradition.

This is not an easy decision. While rates are far lower than during the Omicron surge, there is evidence in the wastewater data and on the BU Dashboard that infections are increasing, fueled in part by the BA.2 variant. Data on long COVID in this age group and myocarditis is still emerging. Members of our community live with unvaccinated children and loved ones who are at high risk.

And, still, we believe this is the right time to take this step. Keeping COVID rates at zero has never been the goal. We aim to keep our community members healthy, both physically and mentally; to keep transmission rates down; to keep our doors open to in-person learning; and to give our students a joyful, engaging experience. Risk of moderate or severe illness right now, particularly in this age group and in a vaccinated and boosted community, is low. Psychologically, the benefit of giving students the option of removing masks after two years of sacrifice and barriers to normal teen engagement is significant.

Testing also gives us a great deal of comfort. Due to the sensitivity of the PCR tests, we can identify positive individuals often before they are shedding virus and therefore keep transmission low. Twice-weekly testing also provides robust data on what is happening epidemiologically in our school and a chance to change course and increase precautions should we need to.

So, we will take this step together tomorrow, monitor the situation closely, stay in contact with all of you, and adjust as we need to. We will revisit these recommendations in the coming weeks based on

our experience at BUA and on infection rates in the broader community. Hopefully, there will not be a need to return to a masking requirement, but should we reach that point, we know that these students and adults will do what is in our collective best interest, as they have so beautifully from the start.

### **Close Contact Policy: Test and Stay**

We are making several small but important changes to our close contact policy. To date, we have required any student or adult who is identified as a close contact to have a negative PCR test before returning to campus; sometimes this has meant that they need to leave part way through the day. Going forward, we will adopt a test-and-stay approach. Any close contacts will be asked to report for a PCR test at BU, but then may remain engaged with the community pending the result. Assuming a negative test, close contacts should continue to test daily for five days (rather than eight) and must wear a mask for a ten-day period after exposure.

### **The Importance of Testing**

Testing is vitally important, particularly as we make this change. BUA students will remain in the twice-weekly testing cadence for the time being. That will allow us to both assess the impact of this policy change and to shift course should we need to. Our students have been wonderfully faithful to this requirement. And, given the importance of testing, any student who repeatedly fails to meet their testing obligation will be asked to stay home from school until they receive a negative test result.

### **Community Moments**

We hope to see many of you at our Be Together event (4/8) for some good food and fun. I know our students are looking forward to the senior play (3/25-3/27), spring concert (5/6), spring musical (5/27-5/29), and senior visual arts reception (5/3). Juniors and seniors are getting excited about prom (5/21) and the post-prom overnight 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 for 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](#).

We sincerely hope that this is another big step toward the kind of normalcy we've all wanted for our children for the past 24 months. We know that this is a significant change. Some of you will celebrate it, others may be feeling nervous. Wherever you are, please reach out with questions and concerns at [academy@bu.edu](mailto:academy@bu.edu). We are here for you.

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

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