**Paul A. Supowitz, Vice Chancellor
Office of Community and Governmental Relations**

710 Alumni Hall

4227 Fifth Avenue

Pittsburgh, PA 15260

412-624-2901

psupowit@pitt.edu

cgr.pitt.edu



August 11, 2020

Dear Neighbors,

As our friends and neighbors, we know you have questions about our plans for returning students, faculty and staff to our campus this month. We also know that our surrounding neighborhoods are diverse, vibrant communities with both shared and unique concerns. While we don’t have all of the answers, we wanted to share with you some key highlights, as well as provide you with resources for where you can find additional information about our plans and updates. We appreciate your partnership as we work through these issues together and we ask for your patience as we work together in new ways.

 **A Safer Return to Campus:** Our return to campus plans are guided by world-renowned experts and the latest information. We are bringing students back in a [phased approach](https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/cmro/july-20-arrival-details) to de-densified housing, using [shelter-in-place strategies](https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/cmro/sheltering-place-details), conducting surveillance testing and adjusting as necessary. We’re also asking our faculty and staff to continue [working remotely whenever possible](https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/return-campus/faculty-staff-and-workplace) to further limit the number of people coming to campus.

Taking a phased approach:

* + Students are returning to campus in cohorts. There are two days scheduled between each cohort. This time will be used to test a random sampling of students. We will adjust cohorts’ arrival dates and times pending test results and other conditions on campus.
	+ Students living on campus are being asked to shelter in place for 14 days. This will be accomplished by sheltering in place for one week prior to coming to campus; traveling safely to campus; and then sheltering in place for one week when they arrive.
	+ Students living off campus are also being asked to shelter in place for a total of 14 days, though they may determine their shelter-in-place time period as a combination of time between before returning or once they have arrived in their off-campus residence.

To disrupt the possibility of outbreaks:

* + 10% of returning students will be randomly tested.
	+ Testing will be made widely available for any student with symptoms.
	+ Tests will be returned within 24-48 hours.
	+ A robust contact tracing system is in place.
	+ Students who live off-campus and test positive have the option to move into Pitt-supported isolation housing on campus.

**Culture and Compliance:** We know that none of these plans will work unless we all do our part. And we know that you have concerns about how we will ensure that our students, in particular, will abide by the health and safety rules we’ve put in place. We are addressing that in several ways.

First, we are working on creating a culture of health and safety and our student leaders are playing a key role in helping us do this. Student leaders from the Pittsburgh campus have created the [Pitt Community Compact](https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/pitt-community-compact), which summarizes the expected behaviors of students, and have asked students, faculty and staff on all campuses to take this pledge to emphasize our culture of adhering to behaviors to protect the community. The Compact focuses on individual health and wellbeing, impact on others and accountability.

It includes: *I acknowledge that our campus is home to many beyond the University community, and those families and communities are impacted by my actions and decisions.*

While we are confident that fostering a culture of health and safety accountability is the right way to start, we know the importance of having concrete ways to enforce our policies. To that end, we’ve added a new code violation regarding compliance with health rules has been added to the Student Code of Conduct: a student who “Fails to comply with guidance set forth by the University, federal, state and/or local authorities regarding public health and/or safety” may be sanctioned. Students who violate the Code of Conduct may be restricted from campus facilities, including classrooms when classes resume in person. Violations can also result in sanctions as serious as semester suspensions.

To encourage students to follow public health guidance including using face coverings and physical distancing:

* + All students are asked to sign the [Pitt Community Compact](https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/pitt-community-compact).
	+ We’ve expanded the student code of conduct to include any student who ‘Fails to comply with guidance set forth by the University, federal, state and/or local authorities regarding public health and/or safety’ may be sanctioned. Students who violate the Code of Conduct may be restricted from campus facilities, including classrooms when classes resume in person. Violations can also result in sanctions as serious as semester suspensions.

To help neighbors let us know of their concerns and stay informed:

* + Report a public health or safety concern to covidconcern@pitt.edu
	+ We publish our numbers weekly here: <https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/covid-19-campus/campus-cases>
	+ The Office of Community & Governmental Relations can field questions and concerns, email us at cgrinfo@pitt.edu or call 412-624-7755

**Oakland-wide Community Meeting Recording:** On July 28, Paul Supowitz, vice chancellor for Community and Governmental Relations, Dean Kenyon Bonner and Dr. Chris O’Donnell presented at the Oakland Planning and Development Oakland-wide community meeting. You can [watch the whole meeting online](https://www.facebook.com/OPDC.org/videos/676799472914210), and look for that presentation to begin at the 52-minute mark. For those of you who are Pitt parents, students and families—or who are curious about questions we’re getting from students!—our [recent student town hall](https://www.provost.pitt.edu/student-town-halls) is also available online.

**Help Spread the Message:** We’ve created [signage](https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/encouragement.zip) for use in our campus buildings and would love it if you’d consider [picking one of your favorites](https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/encouragement.zip) and printing it to post in your window to reinforce the message in our surrounding neighborhoods. If you don’t have a printer at home but would like to request a copy, please let us know and we’ll be happy to put one in the mail for you.

**In Service to Community:** In addition to our [Pitt Pandemic Service Initiative](https://www.pittwire.pitt.edu/news/acts-kindness-pandemic-service-initiative-engages-pitt-community), we’re continuing to find new ways to serve and support the communities we call home. Whether it’s helping to [get technology into the hands of those who need it most](https://nextpittsburgh.com/features/how-pittsburgh-is-closing-the-digital-divide/), [offering virtual babysitting classes](https://www.pittwire.pitt.edu/news/virtual-babysitting-certification-course-plants-seed-youth-success) or [getting meals to local families](https://www.pittwire.pitt.edu/news/how-simple-weekly-phone-call-delivered-more-100-meals-families?fbclid=IwAR0vG79k4668PAz_bYIHAH6WS61tTlhAljviyddX1yj5VgWbMMMaWuEQr7c), our faculty, staff and students aren’t letting the pandemic stop them from partnering and engaging with our neighbors.

**Finding New Ways to Connect:** If this were a normal year, we’d be planning block parties, Day of Caring service activities and voter registration drives in front of the William Pitt Union. Instead, we’re thinking about how we foster these values and strengthen relationships in new ways. In the coming weeks, we’ll be sharing our plans for connecting student residents with neighborhood residents, orienting students to our neighborhoods and reinforcing our expectations of students as members of the broader community.

We also encourage you to visit [Pittwire Live](https://www.pittwirelive.pitt.edu/), where we feature many free, virtual events open to members of the community, like our Diversity Forum, daily exercise classes and children’s programming.

**Fighting the Virus:** Our faculty, staff and students are also doing amazing work to find a vaccine, better treat symptoms and address alarming racial disparities. Below are a few recent highlights from our campus newsletter, Pittwire. We also encourage you to [subscribe to Pittwire](https://www.pittwire.pitt.edu/subscribe), which often includes updates on our health and safety measures, plans for returning to campus and the latest research updates, and [follow us on social media](https://www.pitt.edu/social).

* [UPMC and Pitt Join ‘Operation Warp Speed,’ Offer Opportunity to Participate in COVID-19 Vaccine Trial](https://www.pittwire.pitt.edu/news/upmc-and-pitt-participate-operation-warp-speed-offer-opportunity-covid-19-vaccine-research)
* Racial Data and COVID-19: Why it Matters
* [Pandemic Brings New Urgency to Pitt Food Systems Research](https://www.pittwire.pitt.edu/news/pandemic-brings-new-urgency-pitt-food-systems-research)

Please don’t hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or to schedule a call with a member of our team.

Sincerely,



Paul Supowitz

Vice Chancellor, Community & Governmental Relations

**Who to Contact:** The Community and Governmental Relations team has and will continue to bring the latest updates to our neighbors through virtual neighborhood meetings (such as OPDC Oakland-wide monthly meetings) and communications such as this letter. We are available at **cgrinfo@pitt.edu** or **412-624-7755**. You can also stay current with Pitt’s plans by visiting [coronavirus.pitt.edu](https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/).