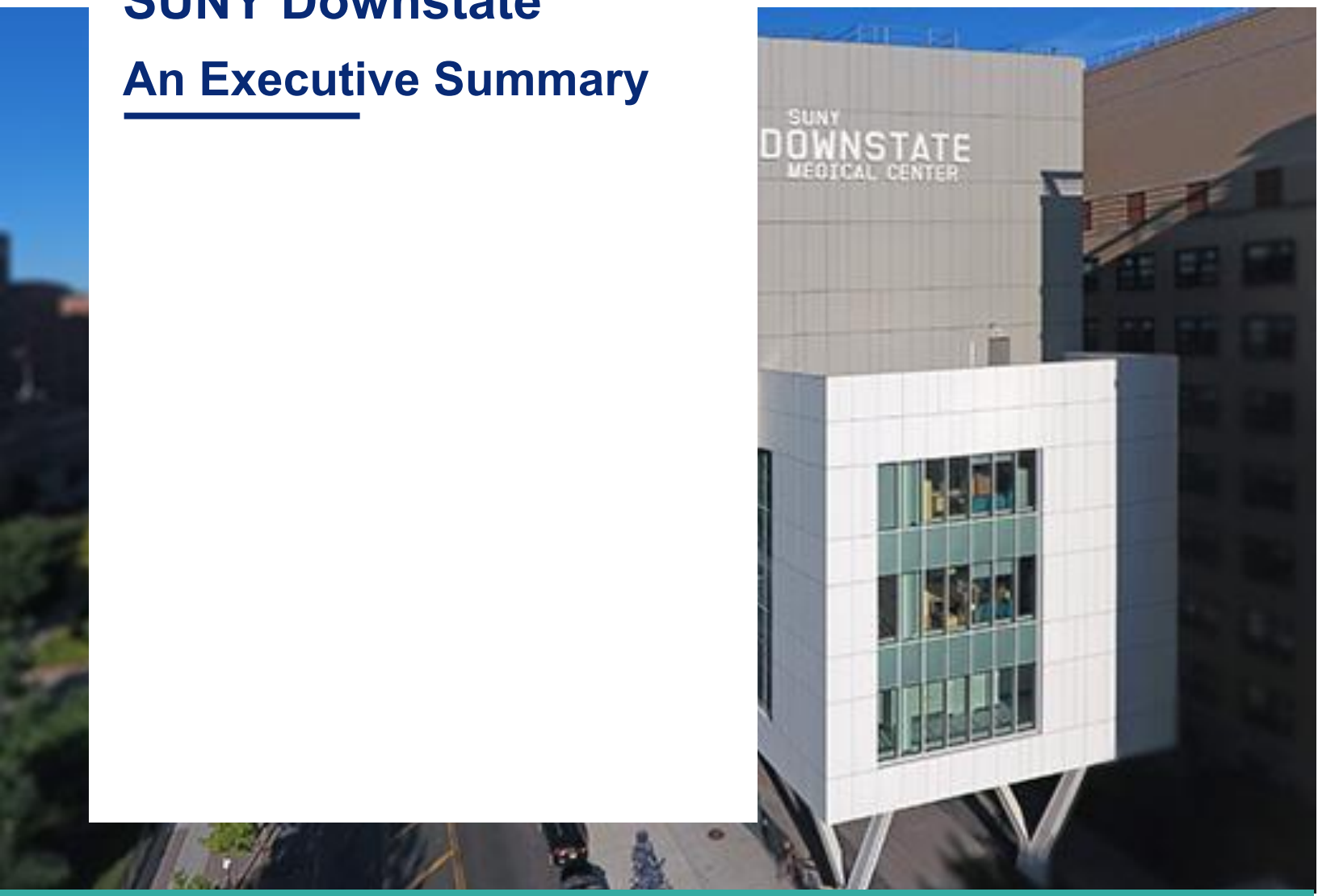
# Restarting On-campus Activities and Operations at SUNY Downstate

## An Executive Summary




JULY 3, 2020 (REVISED AUG 5, 2020)

**SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University**
**Submitted by Wayne J. Riley, M.D.**

SUNY DOWNSTATE Health Sciences University

# Restarting On-Campus Operations

Underlying all plans to resume operations is a commitment to reducing risk and protecting the health and safety of our patients, students, staff, faculty, vendors, and visitors. In the next few weeks, the *Back to the New Normal Workgroup* will continue to issue communications to the campus in order to keep our constituents apprised of our plans.

# Repopulation of the Campus

SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University strives to return to on-campus operations to the extent safely possible and as soon as feasible during this COVID-19 pandemic. Our primary goal is to graduate clinicians, researchers, and public health professionals who will serve the City, greater State of New York, and our nation. When students are instructed on campus, a staggered/alternating approach will be employed that will entail students from certain programs and cohorts coming to campus only on specified days of the week to optimize the efficient use of limited instructional space in a manner that preserves social distancing.

## Capacity to Maintain Social Distancing

Our Department of Classroom Services has updated its scheduling system with reduced classroom occupancy. Anyone accessing the online scheduling portal will be able to see the reduced limits when requesting classrooms. Confirmations of room reservation will include information about how the space must be setup in order to preserve appropriate social distancing. Moreover, to streamline and enhance compliance, all rooms are being scheduled using the same system, something that was not previously done. Revised occupancy signage is posted in each classroom, so that all potential occupants will understand the new limits for safe space use.

To prevent confusion and promote compliance, some physical space alterations, such as removal of furniture and substantial signage installation, will be required to encourage the modified use of space in order to promote social distancing. Fixed seating or furniture in auditoria and lecture halls are tagged with signage to avoid use. Furniture in public spaces such as the lobby has been removed to prevent congregating. Signs are posted throughout the campus as a reminder to wear face-coverings, maintain social distancing, and to wash hands regularly. Directional signs in corridors and decals have been placed in areas where lines are likely to form (Bursar, Cafeteria, etc.).

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Surgical masks will be provided to every person entering our campus who does not have one of their own. Anyone who refuses to wear a mask will be denied entry. Signage at every entry point and

throughout the campus (including in residence halls) clearly alert persons entering the campus of the requirement to wear a face covering while in public spaces. Face coverings under these circumstances will be limited to cloth or disposable masks without valves. For other activities, students, staff and faculty may consult the PPE Matrix to see what is required for their protection. Signage also indicates that every person is subject to screening upon entry.

Students, faculty, and employees have been duly notified that masks will always be required in all public spaces. In consultation with our Office of Student Affairs and the Deans Offices, an enforcement policy for students has been developed and approved for implementation. An enforcement policy for faculty and staff has been developed in conjunction with our Office of Human Resources, Office of Employee and Labor Relations, and University Police Department and approved for implementation. The Office of Employee and Labor Relations will continue working closely with the Unions to ensure awareness of all new policies.

Students participating in clinical placements are expected to wear the required PPE for their respective clinical activity as specified by their assigned clinical site.

## Screening and Testing

SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University utilizes a symptom-based strategy to determine eligibility for campus entrance for all students, staff, faculty, visitors, and vendors.

Downstate is performing temperature checks and COVID-19 symptom screenings for all staff, employees, visitors, and vendors upon entry to our campus facilities. The screening questions address recent exposure to individuals who may have tested positive for COVID-19, presence of a cough (new), difficulty breathing, and/or fever within past 14-days. Anyone who presents with affirmative responses to any of these questions or a temperature > 100$^{o}$F, will be denied access and issued an instructional sheet on how and where to proceed.

If denied access because of a positive screen, students and employees who are asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic will be instructed to proceed to Student/Employee Health Services (S/EHS) for testing where they will be tested and/or instructed to self-quarantine. S/EHS will document and inform supervisors if an employee has denied access or requested to self-quarantine.

S/EHS offers IgG antibody testing for any student or employee who requests it. Molecular diagnostic testing (nasopharyngeal swabs) is available on site and will be performed for all symptomatic students and employees.

## Travel Requirements

As a health science campus, SUNY Downstate students all attend health care education programs. Under guidance from the NYS Department of Health, students who reside out of state who have "traveled in or to any of the designated states requiring quarantine, and are currently enrolled in a NYS health care education program, are required to adhere to the essential worker guidance upon their arrival in New York." (See NYS Travel Frequently Asked Questions) A list of the designated states can be found on the New York State Department of Health Coronavirus Web Site or go to ny.gov/states

As such, SUNY Downstate is requiring that students who have **traveled to a state or US territory where quarantine is required** shall to comply with the New York State requirement to file the required New York State Traveler Health Form online. The student should take a screen shot or print a copy of the last page of the form for their records and to submit as proof that they filled out the form. The form can be completed online here: https://forms.ny.gov/s3/Welcome-to-New-York-State-Traveler-Health-Form.

In addition, students who have **traveled to a state or US territory where quarantine is required or who have traveled outside the United States** shall follow the following protocol (which is an adaptation of the essential worker guidance) regardless of how long they have been outside New York State:

1. The student should maintain a quarantine, as otherwise required under the order, for a period of three to five days.
2. Upon reaching their quarantine location, the student should contact the Student/Employee Health Service to inform them that they will be completing the quarantine and schedule an appointment to be tested for COVID-19. The student must also submit a copy of the screen shot or print of the last page of the New York State Traveler Health Form to the Student/Employee Health Service.
3. After obtaining the test, if the test is negative (results may take up to 72 hours), the student may then attend required classes, but must continue to monitor their temperature every 12 hours; monitor for signs of symptoms; wear a face covering at all times when in public; maintain social distancing; clean and disinfect any workspaces; and avoid extended periods in public, contact with strangers and large congregate settings for at least 14 days from their arrival in New York State. The student may not attend in-person classes until cleared by the Student/Employee Health Service.

If the test is positive, or if the student has any symptoms, including temperature, they must continue in their quarantine until such time as they are cleared by the Student/Employee Health Service.

## Residential Living

The Office of Residential Life & Services has assigned studio and two-bedroom apartments with a maximum of two residents per unit to reduce the risk of a potential outbreak. Additionally, rental of standard rooms with shared kitchens and showers has been suspended until further notice.

The Office of Residential Life & Services facilitates daily cleaning of floor-lounges, doorknobs/push bars, stairwell railings, elevators/buttons, laundry rooms, computer labs, first and second floor kitchens, and first floor bathrooms.

## Operational Activity

Due to the changes in room capacity, on-campus classes will be limited to smaller groups throughout the fall, with adaptations made throughout, based on guidance from the New York City and New York State Health Departments. Didactic learning will largely be online or hybrid through much of the fall semester with on-site learning focusing on hands-on and lab training that is difficult to conduct remotely.

## Restart Operations

While Downstate's buildings that serve largely educational and research operations were minimally occupied at the height of the pandemic, plant operations flushed the water systems in areas that had few occupants and the ventilation systems have been continuously running.

Areas that have not been used during the last several months will undergo thorough cleaning; larger spaces will receive fogging for disinfection. Spaces that are known to have been occupied by individuals who may have been ill with COVID will be sanitized.

## Extracurricular Activities

Until further notice, we encourage extracurricular activities to be conducted via virtual means. Small gatherings will be permitted with social distancing and face coverings required.

## Vulnerable Populations

### Students

For the purpose of completing educational requirements, SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University has implemented several protocols to support vulnerable individuals or those who are not comfortable with returning to campus.

Students with vulnerable statuses and who seek additional safety measures may contact the Office of Disability Services in the Office of Student Affairs. These offices will work with the appropriate Dean/Program Chair/Program Director to provide opportunities for additional times and space where contact with others is limited without compromising the learning activity wherever possible.

Information is being disseminated via email and through a Frequently Asked Questions webpage, which will be updated regularly.

A survey was distributed to all students soliciting feedback on concerns and how we can support their return to the various academic settings. This survey specifically asked students to advise what can be done to ease their concerns. Once this information is received, SUNY Downstate will incorporate their suggestions, within reason, as decisions are made relative to future policies and procedures.

### Faculty and Staff

Area Vice Presidents or Department Heads will communicate with their employees regarding when and how they will return to work on-campus. Employees will be to return to campus to work onsite only when they have been directed.

Employees who have been instructed to return to work on campus and who have medical concerns stemming from personal circumstances that fit within the CDC categories, or who are pregnant, and/or those who have disabilities as defined by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) for which they are seeking accommodations, should contact the ADA Coordinator (ADA@downstate.edu) to request applications.

As an alternative, an employee can submit the medical documentation to the Medical Confidentiality Officer to determine whether the employee's medical condition enhances their susceptibility to infection and/or would qualify them for an accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Hygiene, Cleaning, and Sanitization

Facilities Management and Development (FM&D) has developed standard operating procedures for cleaning high-touch areas several times per day. These areas include rest rooms, drinking fountains, door handles, and elevator buttons. FM&D will sanitize these areas using CDC-approved cleaners.

Employees will also be provided access to cleaning materials to wipe down their respective areas and equipment daily (e.g., keyboard, telephone, mouse, desk surfaces, etc.). Additionally, every classroom, computer laboratory, and simulation center will be outfitted with cleaning supplies so that surfaces, computer equipment, and simulation devices may be cleaned prior to each use.

Additional hand sanitizing stations have been installed on every floor of every building. They are strategically located at every floor and elevator bank landing. Hand sanitizers remain in inventory for placement as volume increases and as needs arise.

Public restrooms, elevators, building entrances, and turnstiles are being sanitized using a hydrogen peroxide-based disinfecting fogger as needed.

# Monitoring

## Testing Responsibility, Frequency & Protocols, and Tracing

Although facility entrance is predicated upon symptom-based strategy, as previously mentioned, students, faculty, and staff may, at any time, request a test from Student/Employee Health Services. Results of all molecular diagnostic tests on students and employees, and inpatients of University Hospital are monitored daily by our Departments of Pathology, Infectious Disease/Infection Prevention, and S/EHS to track trends. Additionally, these results are monitored weekly in the emergency management status call.

Our Department of Pathology provides a daily report to NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH) of all COVID tests conducted at Downstate. When a person tests positive for COVID-19, they are known as a "case" and the NYC Test & Trace Corps' Contact Tracing Team is notified by the NYC DOHMH.

SUNY Downstate's School of Public Health will work closely with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, as well as the other Downstate departments involved in testing and reporting to implement a campus-based tracing program. Sixty-eight contact tracers in the School of Public Health, certified by Johns Hopkins University, will implement campus case investigation, contact tracing, contact support, and self-quarantine and isolation. Like the City's tracers, they will interview individuals with COVID-19 and their "contacts," monitor symptoms through text messaging, and refer individuals for medical attention if they display symptoms. They will interview potentially exposed individuals and advise to self-quarantine and will connect them to health and social services as needed. The process will continue to be rapid, sensitive, and private. Most importantly, the process will remain confidential as not to reveal the identity of any infected person.

# Containment

## Isolation/Quarantine for Students Confirmed or Suspected to Have COVID-19

Several measures are in place to ensure the health and safety of students who reside in the residence halls, including temperature checks and additional screenings. Students in the residence halls who may be ill based on screening or self-identification will be referred to Student/Employee Health Services (S/EHS). If necessary, S/EHS will alert Residential Life & Services (RLS) of the need to implement isolation and/or quarantine procedures. RLS will inform S/EHS of roommate information for follow up, if applicable.

Some rooms in the residence halls will remain unoccupied; those rooms have been designated for use as isolation/quarantine spaces. If a resident student is required to isolate or quarantine, RLS provides students who reside in the residence halls with self-care/cleaning supplies and isolation/quarantine instructions and a resources memo. The resources memo provides information about student counseling and other academic support services. A student in isolation or quarantine will meet daily by phone with S/EHS to provide health monitoring information (temperature, cough, fever, shortness of breath); any food ordering/grocery delivery services will be made directly to the residence hall lobby and delivered to the door by RA/Reception Desk staff member; and place trash in the hallway twice per week at established times to be removed by RLS cleaning staff. A student living in the residence hall and is quarantined will place clothing for laundering in the hallway as needed at established times for pick-up from local laundry service (paid for by student).

Students who do not reside in the residence halls whose screening suggest they may have been infected or whose tests are positive will be sent home for isolation or quarantine. S/EHS will confirm when they are able to return to campus.

## Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection

Once a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 is released from isolation, the residential space occupied for the isolation/quarantine period will be cleaned and thoroughly sanitized.

## Communication

The Department of Psychiatry has made individual support sessions available via video chat for Downstate faculty and staff having difficulty managing stress related to COVID-19. Some of these difficulties could include symptoms of anxiety or depression, such as insomnia, difficulty

concentrating, suicidal thoughts, feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, irritability, and uncontrollable worry and tension.

We have developed a website with frequency asked questions and resource information for all to review. The existence of the website has been publicized at each entry-point. Additionally, we have created an email account to which students, faculty, and staff may submit questions and concerns that will be addressed individually.

# Return to Remote Operations

## Operational Activity

Should it become necessary, SUNY Downstate is prepared to ramp down, shut down, or shift modalities of academic activities on campus-based on the type of instruction the course was in at the time, should change become necessary. Our primary goal is, of course, the safety of all our constituents.

### Clinical Courses (Medicine, Nursing, Health Professions)

SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University offers multiple programs in the College of Medicine, College of Nursing, and School of Health Professions where students participate in clinical activities.

Each program will continuously review their affiliated clinical sites, including the University Hospital of Brooklyn, to assure that students will engage in required health clearance activities and are provided with appropriate PPE. Except for students in their Sub-Internship in the 4$^{th}$ year of the College of Medicine, students will not engage in direct-care of patients who have been identified as having a known COVID-19 infection.

When a recommendation is issued by our program-based accreditors that students should be removed from clinical environments, we will do so immediately. Should a suspension of clinical activities become necessary, programs will make the following adjustments, following the strict guidance provided by our program based accrediting bodies and licensing boards:

- Some training may be conducted virtually (using virtual simulation activities). Depending on the academic program and their accreditation and licensure rules, this option may be limited.
- Since many clinical courses include both didactic learning and practical learning, students may continue with the didactic portions of their courses. Shortened didactic components of courses may be offered to students with simulation, with required clinical activities to be completed when courses resume.

### Laboratory/Simulations/Skills/Lab-based Education Courses (Medicine, Nursing, Health Professions, Graduate Studies)

For skills-based education and simulation, hybrid delivery of courses will be in place as much as possible during the Fall 2020 semester that incorporates distance learning, with in-person direct skills instruction combined with simulation. Should it become necessary to suspend in-person, direct skills instruction, some activities may be able to be replaced by virtual simulation training under the guidelines of our accreditors/licensing bodies.

Laboratory courses will also continue to be virtual where possible; however, some skills require in-person training. If it becomes necessary, all portions of these courses that are possible will be completed virtually, with in-person activities to resume when it is safe to do so.

### Applied Practical Experiences/Dissertation Research (School of Public Health)

In addition to didactic experiences, Master of Public Health and Doctor of Public Health students are expected to gain applied practical experiences in public health at various community-based organizations, hospitals, and Federally qualified health centers. Currently, most students perform a virtual applied practical experience. Students may also complete their applied practice experience at their place of employment (a significant number of our students are working professionals). During the Fall 2020 semester, we plan to continue using a similar strategy. Should it become necessary, these experiences will move to a virtual experience to the extent possible.

Doctor of Public Health students must also conduct their dissertation research to complete their training. Most dissertation research can be completed using existing data with effective supervision that can be provided through virtual approaches. Faculty will work with students to ensure that they are able to complete their work virtually should it become necessary to do so.

### Dissertation Proposals, Pre-Defenses, and Defenses (School of Graduate Studies)

Should it become necessary to do so, thesis meetings for proposals, pre-defenses, and final defenses will be rescheduled to later dates. In cases where the timing of thesis defense meetings impact students' progress, (e.g. M.D./Ph.D. students, proposals, pre-defenses, and final defenses) these meetings can be done remotely whereas the School of Graduate Studies will accept videoconference and teleconference attendance—comments from those in attendance can be made via web-conferencing and/or teleconferencing.

### Seminar Courses (School of Graduate Studies)

The School of Graduate Studies will hold virtual seminars in the Fall 2020 semester when possible. Should it become necessary, program directors will shift all seminars to webcast presentations.

### Didactic Courses (All Schools)

All fully didactic content for all degree programs will be delivered via distance education through the Fall 2020 semester.

### Research (All Schools)

*School of Health Professions*

In the School of Health Professions, research and scholarship activities will use a combination of virtual and limited in-person interactions given most research is applied/health services in nature using descriptive, correlational, and quasi-experimental designs. Should it become necessary, these activities will move to virtual platforms or will be suspended.

*College of Nursing*

In the College of Nursing, all faculty and student research activities will continue to be conducted via distance education. Research in the College of Nursing does not require laboratory space.

*School of Graduate Studies*

For Ph.D. or M.D./Ph.D. students in any of their year of study in the School of Graduate Studies where training involves research, students and faculty continue to be permitted in labs within the existing campus guidelines during the pandemic, as most research being conducted is health-care related. Students and faculty in individual labs have been managing their own schedules for work on- or off-site and will continue to do so. Should a suspension of on-site research activities be required, faculty will coordinate with students.

*College of Medicine*

In the College of Medicine, students can participate in research experiences at multiple points during their academic career. Research and scholarship activities will use a combination of virtual and limited in-person interactions. These activities will be continued, for the most part, without in-person interactions, should it be necessary.

## Move-Out

Should the need arise, residential students who must depart the campus in the event of a "shutdown," will be asked to sign-up for specific time slots during a defined period to maximize social distancing and elevator use. Students living in the residence halls will not be permitted to bring anyone into the facilities to assist them in moving out. Students who are unable to collect all their belongings can arrange to pack and/or store belongings at their expense utilizing a university-approved vendor. Students who may not be able to depart the campus quickly, such as international students, may continue to reside in the residence halls until such a time as they can safely

depart.  Upon being able to depart, they will contact Residential Life & Services office to schedule check-out.

At this time, SUNY Downstate does not have any current plans to fully shut-down our residence halls during a ramped-down operation, but will encourage students whose academic activities have ramped down or shifted to virtual platforms to vacate the facility.

## Communication

The SUNY Downstate Office of Communications and Marketing will facilitate regular communication with all students and faculty through our email listservs and the SUNY Downstate website. Updated information can be sent to all students, faculty and staff, or to groups of students and faculty (by college/school or program).