

Colleagues,

On Monday, we notified you that as a state institution, USC Upstate is subject to the Executive Order that Governor Henry McMaster issued on Friday, March 5. [Executive Order 2021-12](#) directs “all state agencies to expedite a transition back to normal operations.”

The USC System is recognized as one state agency. As such, we worked with the Division of Human Resources in Columbia to submit a systemwide plan for expeditiously returning all employees and staff, including non-essential employees and staff, to the workplace full-time. Details of the plan are below.

As with each step we have taken over the past year, the return-to-the-workplace plan is anchored in our first priority in our response to COVID-19: **to maintain the health, safety and welfare of our campus community**. Like all other System institutions, USC Upstate will continue to require mask usage as it deems necessary; engage in enhanced, routine cleaning and disinfection of classroom and common spaces; report illness and exposure; test for COVID-19; contact trace; and observe quarantine and isolation protocols as long as recommended by the CDC.

All employees are encouraged to register for the vaccine as soon as possible. If you are eligible in Phase 1b, and have not yet signed up via the Spartanburg Regional website, please sign up via the [USC Upstate Vaccine Registration Form](#). From this list, you will be entered into the national Vaccine Administration Management System (VAMS) by the Spartanburg Regional Distribution Center Team and notified about when to schedule an appointment.

There are a number of important details we are sharing here. It is important for you to click on the embedded links for expanded background and information that will help inform the days ahead. Much of this information may already be found on the [USC Upstate’s dedicated web pages](#). System HR forms you may need are linked below.

Here are key elements of the plan:

- **All staff employees except those listed in categories below are to return to campus beginning March 15.**
- To preserve the integrity of our academic and research missions, we **will not change** the current modality of instruction for the remainder of the Spring semester. Faculty who currently are teaching remotely may continue to do so.
- To protect the health and safety of our campus community, all employees returning to campus are strongly encouraged complete a free COVID-19 test on campus. Find a testing schedule and details here: [USC Upstate COVID-19 Testing](#)

- University facilities personnel, as they have done since last March, continue to work to ensure that appropriate health and safety equipment are installed and functional in workspaces in support of your return, and they report ample availability of cleaning and disinfecting supplies. Workspaces on campus currently meet CDC and OSHA guidelines. **Please speak with your immediate supervisor, however, if you have any concerns about your workspace.**
- The Governor’s Order provides leeway for staff employees working remotely because of **childcare responsibilities**. If you are in this category, coordinate with your supervisor to review the specifics of your situation, and submit a request for a [temporary childcare accommodation](#) no later than March to determine the date you are to report to campus. Employees in this category will have a **report to campus date of no later than April 5, 2021.**
- For staff with documented health conditions that make them **high-risk for contracting COVID-19** according to the CDC, the Order gives you until **April 17th** to complete the vaccination process. To be included in this category you will need to request a [temporary health accommodation](#) and provide appropriate supporting documentation from your primary healthcare provider. The exceptions above do not preclude an employee from requesting an ADA accommodation for other health conditions not listed as high risk for COVID-19 by the CDC.
- If you had a **telecommuting** arrangement in place on or before **February 19, 2020**, the terms of that agreement will remain in place.

As we prepare for this next step in our return to normal operations, you likely have a number of questions related to the Executive Order and the plan we just outlined. To help clarify both, we have a number of resources available to you that will help you during this transition. Those include:

- [The Governor’s Order](#)
- [UofSC’s Response Plan to the Order](#)
- [USC Upstate COVID-19 Testing](#)
- [DHEC and USC Upstate COVID-19 Vaccine Registration](#)
- [Risk Mitigation Plan](#)
- Resources for behavioral health and wellness:
 - [Employee Assistance Program](#)
 - [Campus Health Resources](#)
- [Request for Temporary COVID-19 Health Accommodation form](#)
- [Request for Temporary COVID-19 Child Care Accommodation form](#)

Your supervisor and/or vice chancellor is available to assist you as you transition back to campus. If you have additional concerns, your department or division HR contact is also able to answer questions and help resolve problems. **Accommodation forms must be signed by your supervisor and submitted to hr@uscupstate.edu.**

For many of us, this past year was likely one of, if not the most, challenging years of our lives. Your university Human Resources and healthcare teams are here to support your safe transition back to campus and the work you do for our students and community. We will continue to communicate additional details as they become available.

Thank you for all you do in support of the university's mission. We look forward to seeing you on campus soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Derham Cole, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

J. Derham Cole, Jr.
Interim Chancellor

University of South Carolina Upstate
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***Up* is where we live.**