



## SUMMARY OF STUDENT SURVEY, FALL 2021

In October 2021, SU-AAUP conducted a survey of students in order to get a better understanding of their experiences around Covid during the Fall semester. Based on nearly 400 student responses (305 from undergraduate students and 90 from graduate students), survey results reflect student concerns about a range of issues: from anxieties about missing class if they are isolated for Covid, to confusion about required protocols for contact tracing or isolation/quarantine procedures, and inconsistent enforcement of masking policies.

Survey results demonstrate that **one out of three student respondents did not think SU administrators were doing a good job protecting students** this semester from Covid infections. **Half of student respondents reported being worried that they would be infected with Covid** at SU this semester. Students' open comments on the survey expressed **concerns about a lack of weekly mandatory testing for all students, and no accessible rapid testing.**

In contrast to the University's claims at the start of the semester that students were primarily concerned about a return to in-person teaching and a sense of 'normalcy,' survey results suggest that many students are actively concerned about getting Covid, and want alternative ways to access course material that allow students to balance health risks or Covid isolation/quarantine with their commitment to coursework.

In early Fall 2021, as Covid cases among students surged, the [University was caught unprepared](#). Undergraduates were required to [evacuate their Skyhall dormitory](#) so the building could house Covid isolation units; Covid positive students were shuttled, sometimes without prior knowledge, to [isolation housing at Onondaga Community College](#); and students who thought their grade might be jeopardized by missing up to 4 classes in quarantine/isolation felt [pressured to attend classes](#) even when ill.

As the University prepares for Spring 2022, SU-AAUP urges realistic planning that will not unnecessarily risk students' well-being for the performance of 'normalcy' during an ongoing, unpredictable pandemic. We urge recognition of the complexity of student voices and concerns. The health and well-being of SU students demands competent, well-resourced, and effectively communicated procedures for running a residential institution of higher education whose primary goal is to nurture student learning and students' lives.

## OVERVIEW OF STUDENT CONCERNS:

1. **Missing classes** and falling behind in their work, either because they are sick or exposed to Covid and have to go into isolation. Many requested accommodations for attendance and participation, including online or hybrid options for their classes.
2. **Inconsistent following and enforcement of policies**, particularly masking; lack of social distancing, and the impact of large events and parties where masking is not being used widely, such as events in the Dome and Juice Jam.
3. **Lack of clarity** around contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine procedures. Students would like contact tracing to know both when and where they may have been exposed.
4. **Testing**: many students would like mandatory weekly testing, more testing times, testing after quarantine, and the availability of PCR testing even if asymptomatic.
5. **Concern about getting Covid**, getting sick and giving it to others. Students are worried that cases will increase and the campus will shut down again.
6. **Students overwhelmingly support mandatory masking**. Overall, 73% agree (50% strongly agree) to this. Among students of color 87% agree or strongly agree to mandatory masking.

We recommend the SU Administration work with appropriate bodies, such as the Senate Committee on Instruction, the Provost's Office, the Public Health Team, the Covid Management Office, and Marketing and Communication to:

- Develop clear expectations and provide support for faculty and students to accommodate changing situations in the classroom. Work closely with faculty governance structures (Faculty Councils, SU AAUP, the Senate committee on Academic Affairs) to provide guidance for individual faculty that will maximize students' ability to access missed course material, while prioritizing their health. [Note: hybrid and online classes greatly increase faculty workload, and should not be required absent faculty consent, compensation, and adequate IT support.]
- More strongly enact and make public the enforcement mechanisms for faculty, students, and staff abiding by masking requirements.
- Further develop communication strategies to clarify procedures, especially around Covid exposure, contact tracing, isolation, quarantine, and return to class.
- Consider mandatory testing every 7-14 days for vaccinated students, faculty, and staff.
- Consider continuing mask mandate rather than a tiered system

While there are several areas of concern, many students did report areas in which the campus is doing a good job. Forty-five percent of students strongly agree or agree that the administration is doing a good job, and 57% agree communications have been helpful, clear, and consistent.

## STUDENT COMMENTS (representative samples of most common concerns):

### Classes

- “If a student tests positive and goes into quarantine, some students feel hesitant to come to class because of the potential exposure. Not all faculty have provided alternative ways to access class when students feel uncomfortable after an exposure in class or are waiting for covid test results before attending class and potentially infecting classmates.”
- “By not allowing hybrid classes, Syracuse University is forcing students to choose between health and education. Immunocompromised students are given no accommodations for learning remotely by the university as a whole, though many professors are making separate accommodations. SU has also not mandated weekly testing for those going to in-person classes.”
- “I feel like student should have the option to attend their class in person or synchronously. I get extremely uncomfortable hearing half my class cough, especially as someone with a compromised immune system.”
- “There is no option for online classes, no option to stay home if we're not feeling well, no wellness days, no nothing. Covid has not gone away and it is only going to get worse if this lack of responsibility and leadership continues.”
- “There is no option to do classes remotely, and professors aren't allowed to make it readily apparent how to access online course content if you get sick.”
- “I think that the lack of offering for students to take online classes if they come into contact is crazy. Only half of my classes have online offerings at all and for the others if you are sick you just miss class entirely. The dichotomy of don't come if you are sick but if you are sick you miss class is pretty crazy.”

### Inconsistent following and enforcement of policies

- “There's no enforcement of the mask mandates, no support for teachers who want to go online, the covid testing times are erratic and make no sense, and the school puts on huge events even when there are over a hundred cases.”
- “The protocols are a joke. They have us wearing masks in class but pay for a huge student concert where no one was wearing masks and host football games where the vast majority of the public was not either. At the [my] school, many alums were not either during alumni weekend. It really seems like the protocols are performative.”
- “Events at the Dome is a big stresser because nobody is wearing their mask and no staff are enforcing the mask rules.”
- “While vaccination, social distancing, and mask wearing are required, students take courses in crowded classrooms where social distancing is simply impossible and in many instances masks are not worn properly (masks cover the mouth but not the nose).”
- “I feel like the COVID restrictions are arbitrary. It is very frustrating as a student to be required to wear a mask while sitting alone in the library, yet seeing a dome full of unmasked students for a football game.’
- “COVID is not gone and I don't think many students follow rules outside of class. I have an underlying health condition and though I am vaccinated, I worry about being around people who do not follow the rules.”

- “Yeah we have to wear masks in class and stuff but everyone goes out to parties and bars with hundreds of unmasked people. So I really don't think wearing masks in class and in school buildings does anything, it is just annoying.”
- “Even if you are vaccinated, it is possible to transmit and/or catch COVID-19.”
- “The protocols are clear they just don't enforce the policies that they create so the policies are kind of useless.”
- “I think there is a lack of mask enforcement on campus and that the tiered system mask system is not a helpful tool because while we've been at red level for a while I worry about what happens if its lowered and mask optional in a full classroom turns out to be a majority of people unmasked because the pandemic hasn't ended it is still on going.”

#### **Exposure, contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine procedures.**

- “Needs more testing times + students with covid are allowed back into class too soon + teachers are not accommodating to students who wish to stay on zoom for their health and safety.”
- “The university sent emails stating that contagion is not happening within classrooms. However, the CDC states that you need to be tested if you have been exposed to a positive case within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes. And the university is not providing the option to test students with PCR tests.”
- “Not sure if I should get tested at times or not when I get the email of being told that I was in class with a covid positive case.”
- “People are confused about how quarantine works and when they should actually get tested but I think it is a very good option.”
- “They've been clear about the masking policy but I really don't know the notification and isolation policy because of a lack of communication.”
- “When I was in quarantine there was a lack of communication from officials about next steps and procedures.”
- “Masking policy and covid testing have been communicated very effectively, but I have received little guidance on isolation/quarantine protocols.”
- “There has been little explanation and the website is confusing, leaving a lot of questions unanswered. For example, what if someone in your class tests positive, what is the protocol? Even more unclear for TAs.”
- “If possible, it would be nice to know the source of exposures, such as class code or extracurricular event. it would also be helpful to make testing resource protocol clearer.”
- “I do not like how COVID exposure notifications don't tell you when your potential exposure was. God forbid a few days have passed and I now need to warn other people of the potential of transmission.”
- “Syracuse has not done a good job with notifying students about contact tracing.”
- “I get multiple contact tracing emails a day, often at times I can't go and get tested. I also know a lot of people have been blindsided by having to move to make room for people isolating or have been move to places farther away from campus than they were comfortable with.”.

#### **Testing**

- “Rapid testing should be readily available.”
- “Cases are low, (perhaps because there is much less testing going on) but other than masking in classrooms it feels like we are acting as if covid is over. I would like to see mandatory weekly or bi-weekly testing for every student.”
- “To make matters worse for the present moment, regularly scheduled COVID testing for all students is not mandated, so the cases being recorded via the schoolwide COVID dashboard are only keeping track of the positive cases resulted from voluntary testing + sharing of results.”
- “We should go back to mandatory testing for all students weekly-a lot of sick students refuse to get tested since it's optional.”
- “I have been exposed directly to confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 (in classes) and the university has refused to give me a PCR test because I did not have symptoms. People who are asymptomatic can also transmit the virus.”
- “People aren’t getting tested enough. Those who test positive aren’t required to isolate off campus. Their roommates are also not quarantined.”
- “Randomly testing students is a good precaution, but the times that testing is open does not cater to students in any way. In fact, it is difficult to be tested.”
- “I think that testing if exposed should be a requirement rather than a suggestion.”
- “Mandatory weekly testing for everyone. Classes should be both online and in person, unvaccinated students should take online classes.”

### **Communication**

- “I appreciate the more regular, weekly emails about transmissions and cases, it's good to be informed about where our campus stands with infections and tests taken.”
- “The semester did not start off well with communication, we were all confused to who needed to get a COVID test after coming back due to a mass email. I still do not really understand what the protocols are or what preventative measures the school has actually done other than having us sign a pledge, or wear a mask. I don't feel like it is enough.”
- “Lack of honesty, transparency, and attentive consideration of all facts and diversity of university community leading to implementing ineffective policies related to Covid safety measurements that ultimately will increase the number of people infected by Covid.”
- “I don't think the administration is being transparent about its COVID-related policies this semester, which makes me feel in the dark and unprotected. I also don't think administration has a good idea of what life's really like on campus every day...”
- “Administration communicates with students via emails that are 6 pages long and no student has the time or attention span to read through that; when we are informed that we have been in contact with someone who tested positive we are only told at the bottom of a full paragraph. Also if we call Barnes Center to get tested they often hang up on us and tell us to only or get tested if we have symptoms.”

### **Other Concerns**

- “My biggest concern is that I could have COVID and be an asymptomatic case because of my exposure to confirmed positive cases. The university does not want to provide a PCR test, and consequently, I could be a focus of contagion.”
- “It seems as though, with the exception of various signage, the administration has forgotten that we are in covid times still.”
- “Not going away”
- “That we are overly-cautious and will never fully open again.”
- “Why we are all vaccinated and Covid is still spreading like wildfire.”
- “Even with the vaccine, you can still get COVID. I'll always be worried about getting COVID; delta variant.”
- “Overall I would say the administration's inadequate handling of the pandemic this semester is a major concern as it puts all of us at risk of becoming infected with COVID and passing it to others. Specifically among the biggest issues-- lack of communication of clear COVID protocols, non-functional contact tracing, lack of availability of rapid or PCR tests if exposed, lack of social distancing measures in classrooms, continuing to hold huge events without enforcing masks (e.g., football/Dome sports) as well as not taking action against large events held by students (e.g., parties). The recent Daily Orange article sums all of this up very well.”
- “I live with my parents, who are both immunocompromised. If I had the option to do school remotely, I would because it's more important to me that they stay healthy.”

## APPENDIX // SURVEY FINDINGS:

The online survey was administered from September 28 -- October 12, 2021 through SU AAUP faculty members and their networks. All students were advised that survey participation was voluntary and anonymous.

### **Q1 - I think that SU's administration is doing a good job this semester protecting students from COVID 19 infections.**

- 9.37% Strongly agree
- 35.44% Agree
- 20.00 % Neutral
- 20.76% Disagree
- 14.43% Strongly disagree

### **Q3 - Communications to students this semester from the SU administration about Covid safety issues (masking policy, covid testing and notification, isolation/quarantine protocols) have been helpful, clear, and consistent.**

- 14.47% Strongly agree
- 43.15% Agree
- 18.02% Neutral
- 15.48% Disagree
- 8.88% Strongly disagree

**Q9 - Faculty communications to students about covid issues (masking, positive cases among students in the class, student access to course content when in isolation/quarantine) has been helpful and supportive.**

12.76% Strongly agree  
42.09% Agree  
26.02% Neutral  
14.54% Disagree  
4.59% Strongly disagree

**Q5 - I think that requiring mandatory masking in campus buildings for all students, faculty, staff (vaccinated or unvaccinated) makes sense this semester.**

49.87% Strongly agree  
23.16% Agree  
10.43% Neutral  
8.14% Disagree  
8.40% Strongly disagree

**Q7 - I am worried about getting infected with Covid 19 at SU this semester.**

26.28% Strongly agree  
23.98% Agree  
19.64% Neutral  
19.13% Disagree  
10.97% Strongly disagree

**Q11 - My biggest concern about Covid this semester at SU is:**

[no numerical response -- open comments only]