

## [August 2, 2021 — Preparing for Fall Semester](#)

As we prepare for a new academic year, I want to thank you and every member of our community for all you have done and continue to do to keep Georgia Tech strong, stay safe and healthy, and deliver on our important mission even under the most challenging circumstances.

I am particularly grateful to all of you who have gotten vaccinated against Covid-19. Thanks to the work of the Stamps Health Services and the Covid-19 response task force, as well as your commitment to the health of our community, we have administered more than 32,000 vaccines to more than 17,000 individuals on campus. Thousands more have been vaccinated elsewhere, contributing to the safety of our entire community.

The new vaccines have proven to be extraordinarily effective at preventing severe illness. Data across the U.S. show that new hospitalizations and deaths due to the new virus variants are associated almost entirely with unvaccinated individuals. If there is one thing each one of us can do to protect ourselves and keep others safe, it is to get vaccinated. If you have questions or concerns about vaccination, it's critical that you discuss them with your healthcare provider or any member of our Stamps Health Services team led by Dr. Ben Holton. I ask that you reach out to them, get any information you may need, and get vaccinated if you haven't already. [Getting vaccinated at Georgia Tech](#) is easy and free.

If you choose not to get vaccinated, you will be at risk of contracting Covid-19 and infecting others, with potentially severe consequences for you or someone else. To lower the risk for you and others, you are encouraged to wear a mask in indoor public places, including campus buildings, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)). If you are unvaccinated and are exposed to someone with Covid-19, you will be subject to quarantine per current Georgia Department of Public Health guidelines.

The CDC recently issued [new interim guidance](#) recommending the use of masks inside public buildings even by fully vaccinated individuals as a precaution given the broad circulation of the highly contagious delta variant of the virus. At Georgia Tech, everyone is encouraged to wear a mask or face covering while inside campus facilities.

I encourage everyone in the Georgia Tech community to follow these recommendations, vaccinate, and wear a mask in campus buildings.

To be clear, neither vaccination nor masking in indoor public spaces is required at Georgia Tech. The University System of Georgia (USG) continues to work closely with the Georgia Department of Public Health to prioritize the health and safety of our campus communities. While I hope you will follow these public health recommendations, we will respect individual choices.

The free asymptomatic surveillance testing program, which has been so instrumental in our ability to contain the virus on campus this past year, remains available to all students

and employees. You may participate in regular testing even if you have been fully vaccinated, but I especially encourage those who have not been vaccinated to get tested weekly. We regularly update [campus testing sites and hours](#). If you have Covid-19 symptoms, please [book a test for symptomatic students](#).

Lastly, we have received some questions as to whether the executive order recently issued by Atlanta's mayor requiring masks in public buildings applies to our campus. The answer is no. As a state agency, we are subject to directives and guidelines from the state and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

In sum, vaccines and masks are highly effective at stopping the spread of Covid-19. I urge all of you to take advantage of these important protections to help keep you and the rest of our community safe. By taking these measures, I am confident we will have a productive and safe semester. I look forward to seeing you on campus.

Jackets Moving Forward together!

— Ángel