



Dear Members,

Yesterday, we signed an agreement with the administration that will **require vaccines for all USA staff, with exemptions available for health-related and religious reasons**. Employees who are not already vaccinated are required to receive a dose of COVID-19 vaccine by August 16, and a second dose (if required) by September 16. Should you need an exemption, forms should be available on the UMass website by early next week. We are also expecting the university to send an official communication about this agreement at that time.

Unions protect their members, their families, and our communities—and that means taking all available and reasonable steps to providing for our health and safety. Right now, there is no other issue that is more important to us, or to the other employee unions at UMass Amherst who have reached or are working on reaching agreement with the administration on this issue. This agreement will ensure near-universal vaccination across all populations on campus, while recognizing the needs of individuals who cannot be vaccinated. We take this step in solidarity with our students, who have nearly all taken the vaccine as required. Fair is fair—we all need to do our part.

In our conversations with members, we have heard overwhelming support for requiring vaccinations and other health and safety protections included in the agreement, especially from those with health issues and those caring for young, unvaccinated children and other at-risk family members.

As part of a caring community, **we believe that everyone should wear a mask in shared, enclosed workspaces** (and wherever social distancing is not possible). We encourage every member to start doing so immediately, and we are asking the administration to immediately implement an indoor mask requirement. This would mirror the new guidance from the CDC for K-12 schools, which is [now recommending universal indoor masking](#) for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status. Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, recently warned that we need to treat the Delta variant like a “different virus” and that the spread is getting out of control. We all have an obligation to do our part to prevent illnesses and deaths—staff, students, faculty, and UMass

administrators—and as a union, we will continue to use our collective voice and power to advocate for the safety of our community.

For members who are currently in an unsafe work situation, such as areas with exposure to unmasked individuals or poor ventilation (particularly for members who are immunocompromised or living with others who are at high risk)—please know this: you are not required to risk your life to keep your job. If you are in this situation, we urge you to: 1) document your health and safety concerns with a supervisor in a request to work remotely until the situation is resolved, and 2) contact the union at [usa@external.umass.edu](mailto:usa@external.umass.edu) if you get any pushback.

Finally, to support our members at the end of what has been a very stressful year and otherwise help promote health and safety through the winter holiday season, we have reached agreement with the administration to **close campus for all of the days between Christmas and New Year's Day**. We hope everyone enjoys the extra days off this year. We've more than earned them.

The actual agreement is attached.

*In Solidarity,*

*Leslie Marsland, USA President*

*Mary Malinowski, USA Vice President*

The link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>