

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Kristina M. Johnson, PhD
President-elect



Dear Students, Faculty and Staff:

I am excited and honored to have been selected as your 16th president. As we stand on the cusp of a fall semester like no other, I am looking forward to getting to work on behalf of Buckeye Nation — and being on campus with you during our first week of classes. We will all be embarking on this unprecedented journey together.

My top priority as president is to do everything possible to support our Buckeye family so that we can learn, teach and work in a safe and healthy environment. As we prepare to return to campus in the fall, I know many of you have questions. As new discoveries about the coronavirus are being made every day, the situation is very fluid. I ask for your patience and flexibility as we continue to monitor this complex and rapidly changing environment. We will be regularly and publicly providing updates as information is available.

We all want the same thing — to return to on-campus instruction, research and other campus activities as safely as possible and in a manner that gives everyone peace of mind. To accomplish this goal means we must all work

together as Buckeyes. In order to remain open this fall we must control the prevalence of the virus as measured by a range of qualitative and quantitative metrics. We must preserve residence hall spaces and hospital beds available for quarantine, isolation and treatment. If we cannot reduce the rate of infection and hospitalizations, we will return to remote instruction and have to close residence halls. Avoiding this means we will all have to shoulder a measure of the burden and adhere to stricter health and safety guidelines.

The Big Ten Conference [announced](#) today that it is postponing fall sports. I share the pain, frustration and disappointment of our student-athletes — and all Buckeye fans. We are in discussions about what this decision will mean for our entire athletics program, and I will continue to work closely with Athletics Director Gene Smith, Coach Ryan Day and all coaches and other leaders, to return our student-athletes to competition as soon as possible, while staying safe and healthy.

For details on how we plan to accomplish a safe and healthy return this autumn semester, I encourage you to visit the [Safe and Healthy Buckeyes](#) website and check the site regularly for updates.

Due to the fast-changing nature of this pandemic, we have already altered and strengthened many aspects of our return-to-campus plan, including:

- Reducing the maximum size of in-person classes from 100 to 50 to increase physical distancing and decrease the probability of asymptomatic transmission;
- Ramping up to test all on-campus, residential students on a weekly basis;
- Offering faculty and staff the opportunity to be tested on a weekly basis;
- Limiting in-person events and gatherings to 10 or fewer participants (more may participate remotely);

- Recruiting more students and staff to assist with contact tracing.

These changes are being made in addition to a previously stated requirement that everyone wear masks while on campus — both indoors and outside. There will also be daily health checks, redirected foot traffic flow around high-use buildings, continued teleworking for employees — when appropriate — and an expected adherence to good hand hygiene.

All of these efforts, the details of which are outlined below, will enable us to return to campus — and remain there throughout the duration of the semester — in the safest manner possible.

COVID-19 testing

We are fortunate to have the talent, expertise, equipment and resources of a world-class research university with one of the best medical centers in the country. This has enabled us to pursue a comprehensive testing program for our campuses, in which participation will be mandatory for all students living on campus or in university managed housing. Students may opt out of the testing program, but this may result in moving to fully online courses, and those students may not be able to live in university housing. We will also offer testing to students living in high-density, aggregated housing, as well as faculty and staff who are working on our campuses.

To accomplish this program, in addition to doing conventional COVID-19 testing, we also plan to employ specimen pooling that allows for more people to be tested quickly using fewer resources. The samples collected are tested in a pool or “batch” using one test, rather than testing each individual sample. If the pool is positive, one or more of the individuals tested in that pool may be infected, and each of the samples in that pool is tested again individually. Because the samples are pooled, far fewer tests are run overall, meaning

fewer testing supplies are used and more tests can be run simultaneously. Importantly, this approach will ensure precious testing reagents and resources continue to be available for testing symptomatic individuals as well as individuals identified for strategic testing by the state of Ohio.

The pool testing program will be part of the university's comprehensive testing plan announced last week, which includes:

- [Surveillance testing](#) to monitor COVID-19 in random samples of asymptomatic undergraduate students, and screening testing, via pool testing methods, for graduate and professional students living in university-owned residence facilities;
- Testing of symptomatic and exposed students, faculty and staff;
- Voluntary asymptomatic testing for faculty, staff, graduate students and professional students;
- Targeted testing should COVID-19 hotspots be identified;
- The sharing of aggregate information with the public in a way that protects individuals' medical and educational privacy.

More information about how this testing program will work and what you need to do to participate will be provided in our regular updates.

Contact tracing

When someone tests positive for the virus, it is critical that we trace the contacts they have had with others to limit the spread of the virus. Students, faculty and staff with a positive COVID-19 test will be interviewed by a trained contact tracing team working under contract with Columbus Public Health. As mentioned above, this team will be augmented by additional students and staff — who will be trained in contact tracing. All appropriate measures are taken to protect medical privacy.

Daily health check

Beginning August 14, a [daily health check](#) to report body temperature and health status will be required for all students, faculty and staff every time we come to campus or are working in the community on behalf of the university. Requiring a daily check of all on-campus individuals will help us to quickly identify any possible outbreaks from those exhibiting symptoms and move quickly to prevent transmission. We encourage our Buckeye community to make the daily health check part of your routine each and every day, whether your destination is campus or elsewhere. Completing the health check every day will also help you to increase your awareness of COVID-19 symptoms and help each of us protect our broader communities.

Online training and pledge

As shared previously, all students, faculty and staff are required to complete an online training course and the Together As Buckeyes Pledge. The 10-minute training is available through [BuckeyeLearn](#); the pledge must be signed upon completion of the training.

The training course covers expectations for daily health checks, personal protection such as face masks, hygiene, physical distancing, staying informed and more. The pledge acknowledges an understanding of and commitment to the behaviors described in the training and represents our shared commitment to staying safe and healthy.

Face masks requirement

Face masks are an important tool to help protect our colleagues, classmates and members of the broader community from the virus. Masks must be worn in indoor settings, including, but not limited to: classrooms, common areas,

conference rooms, shared office spaces, hallways, buses and shared vehicles on all Ohio State campuses. Masks must also be worn in outdoor spaces on campus, even when individuals can maintain appropriate physical distancing. This is another requirement we have recently strengthened as we must do all that we can to protect each other.

Face masks are part of the return-to-campus kits that include one disposable mask, two reusable masks, a thermometer, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer.

Class sizes and reduced population density on campus

As we continue to do all that we can to protect our community, the university has a comprehensive plan for limiting population density across all campuses.

As mentioned above, we are limiting the size of in-person classes to 50 students or fewer. Sections with more than 50 students will be making adjustments in course delivery among in-person, online and blended learning opportunities. Additional information will be shared as soon as possible.

Ohio State will continue to operate with significantly reduced density in the on-campus workforce by continuing teleworking when possible.

Events and gatherings

To align with our efforts to keep Buckeyes safe and healthy, all Ohio State autumn 2020 events and gatherings — whether on or off campus — will be virtual, with 10 or fewer in-person participants.

An event is defined as a planned activity, other than academic classes scheduled as part of the university curriculum, that is held in a university building or outdoor space on a university campus or with a community

partner. A gathering is defined as a formal or informal assembly of people that is either planned or spontaneous.

These restrictions do not prohibit gatherings for the purpose of the expression of First Amendment protected speech.

Again, I want to thank each of you for your collective efforts, flexibility and patience as we move forward. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther and their respective teams for their leadership, support and guidance as we begin this academic year.

As part of the Buckeye family, we all play an important role in taking care of each other. If we all follow the university requirements, we will be able to continue to do the familiar things we love — teaching and learning, conducting research, walking across our campuses, and much more.

Finally, I want to take a moment and recognize the outstanding accomplishments of our summer graduates. More than 1,700 Buckeyes were awarded degrees in a virtual ceremony on Sunday where former Buckeye great, Olympian and NBA All-Star Michael Redd delivered an inspirational commencement address. I want to send my heartfelt congratulations to the newest members of our Buckeye alumni family, and I invite our entire community to share messages of congratulations on social media using #OSUGrad.

A full video of the commencement ceremony — including the pre-ceremony program — is available here: <https://livestream.com/wosu/summer2020>.

I know that the future is very bright for these new graduates. By working Together As Buckeyes, we will all emerge from this challenge stronger than ever.

Sincerely yours,

Kristina M. Johnson, PhD

President-elect



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