The Northern Illinois University community is committed to the safety and well-being of each other. As such, President Lisa Freeman convened a working group comprised of representatives from various divisions and offices to develop protocols and guidelines regarding the eventual return to working on campus or other off-site workspaces. An additional working group, comprised partially of internal and external public health experts, helped inform several of the protocols and guidelines. The membership of both groups is listed at the end of this document.

The following is based on the best information available regarding public health as of the end of May 2020, and will be amended as more public health information becomes available. To stay current or to ask questions or clarifications regarding the protocols and guidelines, visit the NIU Keep Working website.

To protect our community, all employees are expected to comply with the protocols and guidelines articulated in this document. Failure to do so jeopardizes the safety and well-being of our students and colleagues, and can result in corrective action. Huskies appreciate and respect all members of our community, and are encouraged to continue to demonstrate civility and support of each other during this stressful and uncertain time.

The working group followed these assumptions:
- Governor Pritzker will allow university employees to return to work June 1, 2020.
- Restrictions remain in place regarding size of groups (no more than 10).
- Restaurants will continue with delivery or takeout only.
- Masks will be required to be worn in places where physical distancing cannot occur.
- The Holmes Student Center will still be used as a quarantine site through the end of July.
- K-12 will return to in-person instruction in August 2020.

The working group abided by the following guiding principles:
- The university will follow all applicable local, state and federal public health guidelines and orders.
- The health and safety of our students and employees come first.
- Supervisors will remain flexible to accommodate employees who must balance work and caregiver responsibilities.
- University operations will continue in a manner consistent with expert public health guidance and principles.

The following protocols and guidelines will be put into place for the safety of our employees.

Returning to working on campus or the employees’ off-site workspace

- Employees who can perform their job duties remotely are encouraged to continue working remotely through at least July 31, 2020.
  - Employees should think about what will work best considering their circumstances, and contact their supervisor to discuss and come to an agreement.
- For offices where work can be done remotely, but that have employees who would like to return to campus to work, using a rotational schedule is strongly encouraged for all units (effective through at least July 31, 2020).
  - When using a rotational schedule, supervisors should schedule employees for a full business day as opposed to bringing some employees in during the morning and another group in for the afternoon. Doing so will lower the number of people on campus in a given day.
- Supervisors may also consider staggering start- and end-times for employees to reduce foot traffic.
Before returning to campus for work, all employees must take a brief training. Information on how to access the training will be sent to employees via their NIU email accounts. Those employees who do not have access to the internet at home should take the training on campus when they return to work. The training is necessary because we value each other and want to make sure that all employees understand the safety expectations and protocols.

- Those employees whose jobs already require them to work on campus must still take the training.

The Employee Assistant Program has developed Returning to Working on Campus Toolkits for employees and supervisors available at the NIU Keep Working website.

Each day before coming to campus for work, employees should ask themselves the following questions:

- Do I have a cough?
- Do I have a fever?
- Do I have chills?
- Do I have an unusual persistent headache?
- Do I have shortness of breath or difficulty breathing?
- Do I have loss of taste or smell?
- Do I have any new respiratory problems (e.g., wheezing, congestion)?
- Do I have abdominal discomfort?

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” employees should notify their supervisor and not come to campus or to their off-site workspace.

- Employees who feel well enough to work from home can do so. Otherwise, employees should utilize available sick leave benefits.
- Employees who are sick should not come to campus to work until:
  - They have had no fever for at least 72 hours (without fever-reducing medication).
  - Other symptoms have improved (for example, shortness of breath is better).
  - At least 10 days have passed since the symptoms first appeared.

Employees who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 must notify Human Resource Services immediately. HRS will maintain confidentiality and work with the DeKalb County Health Department to determine exposure to other members of the NIU community. In this situation, employees will be required to provide doctor’s notes that provide clearance to return to campus at the appropriate time.

Employees who have had any close contact with someone who has a lab-confirmed or presumptive COVID-19 diagnosis should call the NIU Police Department’s nonemergency number (815-753-1212) and their local health care provider. The police department will ask the employee a series of screening questions and share the results with the DeKalb County Health Department. Employees should not come to campus or to their off-site workspaces until receiving guidance after answering the screening questions.

PPE requirements and distribution

- Employees will be required to wear face masks when physical distancing cannot be maintained, or when they are in indoor shared spaces (e.g., break rooms, kitchens, restrooms) regardless if they are alone.
  - Employees who cannot wear face masks because of underlying medical conditions should notify their supervisor immediately and continue working from home until they are given further instructions. See more details at the FAQ page on the NIU Keep Working website.
  - Any employee who cannot wear a face mask because of an underlying medical condition must contact, or be referred to, the Office of Academic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ADEI) for assistance. ADEI will engage in an interactive process with the employee and their department/unit to determine any reasonable accommodations that might be necessary to assist the employee in performing their job.
  - Employees and supervisors are expected to practice patience, be reasonable and work together to resolve issues or concerns with the use of face masks.
  - Supervisors are expected to work with their employees on attempting to find a suitable solution to their employees' issues or concerns with the use of face masks. If an employee is represented by a union, supervisors must consult with Labor Relations in Human Resource Services before implementing any resolutions to employee concerns/issues. In the event that a resolution with an employee cannot be reached, supervisors/managers must consult with other appropriate offices, such as Human Resource Services and/or the Office of General Counsel, before making any final decisions.
  - For those who need or want them, the university will provide each employee with two reusable, washable face masks.
    - Each unit or area should have a designated person request the number of face masks needed. Requests can be made at the Facilities Management and Campus Services/Central Stores website.
  - Any vendors, visitors or others conducting business on university property will be required to wear face masks when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
  - The university will provide face masks, hand sanitizer and some disinfecting products (e.g., spray bottle with disinfectant
and paper towels) for employees to self-clean their work areas.

- Requests for PPE and disinfecting products should follow standard processes for requesting supplies for offices/units. We ask that people do not request disinfecting products for individual offices or workspaces, but for areas as a whole. For example, each employee in the Office of the General Counsel should not request disinfecting products, but the office as a whole can do so.

- These common PPE and disinfecting products will be provided at no cost for General Revenue units/operations. Auxiliary operations should continue to purchase products to allow for appropriate accounting between the separate financial systems.

- For a list of products that the university carries (e.g., gloves) as well as instructions for how to obtain them, visit the Facilities Management and Campus Services/Central Stores website. Typically, the person normally responsible for ordering supplies for an office area or operation is familiar with the process of ordering items through Central Stores.

- For those units that might need products beyond what the university carries, units should procure items as they normally would.

Cleaning and sanitation

• General cleaning: All buildings will be cleaned daily using CDC guidelines utilizing appropriate cleaning supplies. Daily cleaning will primarily focus on common spaces and will include wiping down high-touch areas including door knobs, sinks, water fountains and elevator buttons.

  - Employees should be sure to wipe down their workspaces on a regular basis. To request disinfecting products for office areas, visit the Facilities Management and Campus Services/Central Stores website.

  - Office trash collection may also be centralized where feasible to minimize the need to enter office areas, and provide more time for common area sanitizing efforts. More details will be coordinated with office areas as plans are developed.

• Restrooms: All restrooms will be cleaned daily. Where possible, restroom doors should remain open and employees should wash their hands thoroughly. Restrooms without air dryers will have a trash can placed by the entrance/exit door. When it's not possible to leave a door open, employees should open the door with a paper towel and place the paper towel in the trash can upon exiting. Brushing teeth and shaving in university restrooms are prohibited.

• Interior doors: Interior doors should remain open during business hours to the greatest extent possible. If door stops are needed, contact your Building Representative or submit a request to the Facilities Management and Campus Services Work Request webpage. Please do not keep stairwell doors open as this violates the fire code.

• Hand sanitizer stations: Hand sanitizer stations have been placed near the entrances to all buildings. Offices can order bottled hand sanitizer as noted above.

• Disinfectant spray: Disinfectant spray will be provided in all computer labs and other high-touch/high-traffic offices and spaces. Offices overseeing these areas can order disinfectant spray as noted above.

Workspace areas, including conference rooms, offices, reception areas, lounges and kitchens

• With the exception of private offices or workspaces where physical distancing is possible, face masks must be worn at all times in these areas.
  - Although employees will not be required to wear face masks in their private offices or workspaces where physical distancing is possible, they should be sure to clean any surfaces (e.g., tables) before employees visit the offices or workspaces.
  - All meeting and conference rooms must be configured to comply with physical distancing.

• Meeting and conference rooms should be used sparingly. Employees are encouraged to continue using Microsoft Teams when holding meetings.

• All reception areas or offices where lines might form must put tape on the floor at a distance that complies with physical distancing guidelines, and physical distancing signage must be posted. Signage may be downloaded from the NIU Keep Working website.

• High-touch items such as pens or magazines must be removed from waiting areas.

• Food consumption should take place in a person’s individual workspace or outdoors in a manner compliant with physical distancing.
  - Employees should always wash their hands before and after eating.

• Disposable utensils must be used in kitchens. Reusable items (e.g., flatware, dishes, cups) should not be used.

• The use of communal microwaves, coffee pots and toasters is discouraged.

• Food and drink in refrigerators should be clearly marked with the person’s name and removed at the end of each day.
  - Employees should not share food, including condiments and creamer.
Elevators and stairwells

- No more than one person should enter an elevator at any one time.
  - Residence halls will have different guidelines.
- Employees should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer as soon as possible after exiting elevators.
- Face masks must be worn in elevators.
- Please use the stairs if possible and avoid touching handrails.
  - If handrails must be used, employees should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer as soon as possible after exiting stairwells.
- Where possible, signage should be placed on each floor next to stairwells designating it as “up” or “down.”
  - Building representatives will take the lead on designating the directional flow of stairwells.

Meetings and other employee interactions

- Employees are strongly encouraged to continue using Microsoft Teams for meetings, even when employees are working on campus.
- If meetings are held in person, physical distancing must be followed and no more than 10 people may be present in the meeting.
  - Face masks must be worn.
- Employees are encouraged to limit the use of public spaces such as lounges and break rooms.
- Employees should not invite unnecessary visitors to campus.

Buildings

- Most buildings will be unlocked during business hours.
- The Holmes Student Center and Student Recreation Center will remain closed until at least July 31.
- Library facilities are closed until August 3.
  - Research assistance is available through email, online chat and phone.
  - Materials can be requested for check out and pick up from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.
  - Noncirculating materials will be digitized upon request when possible.
  - Appointments may be made to access distinctive collections.

Additional Resources

- ADA Employee Accommodation.
- Benefits.
- Freedom of Expression Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy (PDF).
- What to do if you are sick.

Return to Working on Campus Working Group

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John Heckmann, Division of Administration and Finance
Jason John, Division of Public Safety
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