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**TO:** Boston University Staff

**FROM:** Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer  
Gary Nicksa, Senior Vice President for Operations  
Ken Freeman, Vice President for Human Resources *ad interim*

**DATE:** July 9, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Return to Residential Education; Process for Staff Requesting Workplace Adjustment for Fall 2020

Residential education is core to the mission of Boston University and to the experience of both our undergraduate and graduate students. Our long-standing commitment to residential education and the in-person engagement of faculty, students, and staff is a fundamental characteristic of our University. How we accomplish this goal while ensuring the safety of all members of our community is critically important, and considered in detail below.

This memo provides detailed information on the following topics:

- Why a return to campus is important for all of us at Boston University
- Results of the recent staff survey, which informed decision-making
- Safety measures underway to help ensure everyone's health and wellbeing
- Process and form for staff to request a workplace adjustment (**\*\*due by Wednesday, July 15\*\***)

### ***Return to Campus***

The return to residential education for the fall 2020 semester – while taking all appropriate and necessary [public health precautions](#) – is important for a number of reasons. First and foremost, our students and their families are eager to return to residential education and on-campus engagement with their peers and, importantly, with faculty and staff. We believe that it is important to be responsive to our students. In addition, as President Brown [articulated last week](#), the COVID-19 pandemic has already had a significant financial impact on the University and we must minimize additional negative impacts on the University's overall operational and financial viability so that we may emerge from this period financially sound.

Our efforts to return to residential education this fall have been at the forefront of the establishment of a full suite of public health precautions, including the creation of a new on-campus COVID-19 testing facility. These are outlined, and will be continuously updated, on the [Back2BU](#) website.

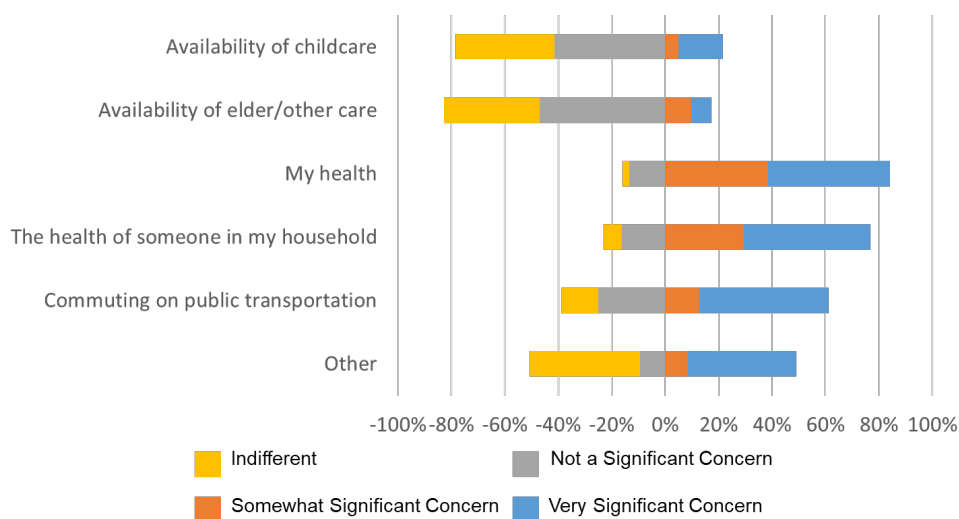
However, we know that many have expressed apprehension about the health implications of returning to work on campus. The wellbeing of all members of our community is our highest concern, and we write to address the concerns you have expressed, as well as mechanisms available to offer further relief, as necessary.

### ***Results of Staff Survey***

We are grateful to all who responded to the survey that was distributed to staff two weeks ago; almost 3,000 staff members participated, and your thoughtful responses have informed the process that is outlined below. The full results of the staff survey are available [online](#).

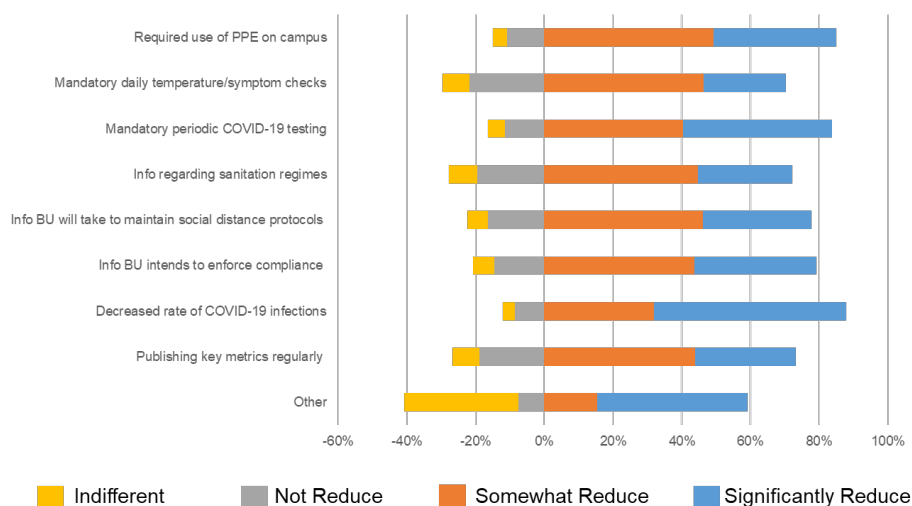
Similar to results of the recent faculty survey, a clear theme that emerged from the staff survey was that for many, concerns about your personal health, and the health of those in your households, are primary. This is illustrated in Figure 1:

What personal circumstances pose concerns about working on campus?



Another important theme that emerged from the survey was what factors would mitigate those concerns, and this data is shown in Figure 2:

## What general factors would reduce your level of concern about working on-campus?



These are critically important issues. We understand and hear the concerns that you have about your health, and the health of those in your households.

### ***Safety Measures***

Many of the safety measures identified as impactful in the survey, including regular COVID-19 testing and required use of face coverings, are included in our plans for the fall. In partnership with our Medical Advisory Group, subject-matter experts across BU, other similarly situated universities, and local public health authorities, we are developing a comprehensive set of measures to make our campuses as safe as possible.

Key components of our health and safety plan include:

- An on-campus [COVID-19 testing facility](#) with the capacity to test all BU students, faculty, and staff. Details about testing frequency and locations are still being finalized and will be shared with the community as soon as they are available;
- A symptom-monitoring web app through which all community members will monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms;
- Required use of face coverings and physical distancing at all campus locations;
- Building-specific reopening plans that include signage, visual cues, and de-densification where necessary;
- A comprehensive review of all HVAC systems, upgrading filters as needed; and
- A planning effort, currently underway, to establish new maximum occupancies for all classrooms and ensure appropriate physical distancing for faculty and students.

You will hear more about this plan in the coming weeks, and we will continue to monitor and implement best practices in safety protocols and procedures as they develop.

### ***Process for Requesting a Workplace Adjustment***

Although we are working to ensure that the campus is as safe as possible for faculty, students, and staff, we recognize that some staff may still be reluctant to return to work on campus. This may include staff members who are or might be considered at [increased risk of severe illness](#) from COVID-19, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), or who live with someone who is or might be considered at increased risk of severe illness from the virus (“CDC Risk Groups”). **Staff members who are in a CDC Risk Group may utilize the following process to request a workplace adjustment for the fall 2020 semester:**

1. Complete and submit this Workplace Adjustment Request Form: <https://www.bu.edu/hr/bu-covid-19-workplace-adjustment-program-staff/>. For all requests based on a personal medical condition, medical documentation will be required. The request form includes a field where staff may specify the adjustment(s) they are seeking. Given the limited time available to plan for the fall, we ask that staff member intending to request a workplace adjustment submit this form no later than **Wednesday, July 15.**
2. Submitted Workplace Adjustment Request Forms will only be accessible to and reviewed by a small team of experienced professionals in Human Resources (HR) and Equal Opportunity (EO). The details of the adjustment request, and any personal medical information, will be maintained in HIPAA compliant storage locations, separate from employee files. No personal medical information will be shared with deans or administrative unit heads or their designees.
3. If the criteria are met to document that a staff member is in a [CDC Risk Group](#), the individual will be conditionally approved to receive a Workplace Adjustment. Once the submission deadline has passed, the HR/EO Team will provide the dean or administrative unit head with only the following information: the names of those staff members who are conditionally approved for an adjustment, and the adjustment that each staff member has requested.
4. Based on this information, deans and administrative unit heads (or their designees) will work to determine what adjustments may be made, or if another approach is more appropriate.

We hope to be able to work through all requests by Friday, July 31.

Please note that some conditions included in the CDC Risk Group for COVID-19 might be considered disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The process for requesting a reasonable accommodation under the ADA is distinct from the COVID-19 Workplace Adjustment Request Process and is handled by Equal Opportunity. Further information about the University’s reasonable accommodation process for employees is available [online](#).

We know that some staff may have concerns about returning to campus that do not fall under the specific conditions included in the CDC Risk Groups. If you have a concern about returning to campus that is not addressed above, please complete and submit the [Workplace Adjustment Form](#). When you access the form, proceed to the “Other” box at the end and provide details

about your situation. After we gather this information, we will determine whether or not there are ameliorative steps we might take.

If you have questions about the process or the form, please call COVID-19 Support at 617-358-4990. The support line is staffed Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm.

Finally, we are grateful for the work that you do and for the concern and care you've shown for our students and each other. Your dedication to your work is evident and greatly appreciated. We will continue to keep you informed as the University's planning efforts move forward and will offer additional opportunities for you to provide feedback throughout the coming months.