Dear Colleagues,

Following up on the Chancellor’s memo earlier today, I am writing to update you on COVID-19 vaccine availability and related policies of particular interest and relevance to faculty at UC Santa Barbara. As you have probably heard, vaccine supplies are very limited, and California Department of Public Health updates regarding their distribution and eligibility are changing daily. Representatives of UC Santa Barbara meet weekly with the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (SBCPHD) and UC Health’s Vaccination Task Force. Our representatives convey the information they receive to UC Santa Barbara’s COVID-19 task force at our daily meetings. Since the situation remains very fluid, this update is based on our best current information.

Fall campus reopening plans and UC vaccination policy

President Drake has announced a goal of resuming in-person instruction on all ten UC campuses by Fall Quarter 2021, local conditions permitting. In order to achieve this goal safely, we will have to reach a high level of immunity amongst our faculty, staff and students through vaccination by the fall. Vaccination will provide considerable protection against infection for each one of us, and it will also protect vulnerable members of our community, including those who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.

Recently, UCOP announced a systemwide interim policy that will eventually require all non-health care employees to present evidence of vaccination in order to work on-site or participate in on-campus activities, unless the employee affirmatively opts out by completing and signing a declination after receiving appropriate information about the vaccine. We are awaiting word on UC’s vaccination policy for students.

Progress of vaccinations on our campus

UC Santa Barbara’s Student Health Services (SHS) is authorized to receive vaccines and to administer vaccinations in accordance with SBCPHD instructions. Thus far, SHS has received only a small number of doses of the Moderna vaccine, which requires two doses spaced 4-6 weeks apart to reach full effectiveness. Vaccines have already been offered to campus frontline healthcare employees (including staff in the campus COVID-19 testing clinic and testing laboratory, custodial staff who clean the SHS facility daily, and staff maintaining the quarantine/isolation housing for students). Vaccines were also offered to active employees (faculty and staff) aged 75 and older, with any remaining doses going to those 65 and older. These groups are the only ones we are currently permitted by SBCPHD to vaccinate.

Vaccination appointments on campus and in the community

Eligibility is being determined by a combination of payroll status in UCPath, registration for the daily COVID-19 symptom screening survey, and Winter/Spring Quarter teaching assignments. UC Santa Barbara vaccinations are tracked in a state database to verify that we are following all state and county guidelines. At the moment, retired and non-active emeritus faculty are not eligible for UC Santa Barbara vaccinations. Family members of UC faculty are also ineligible. These groups are encouraged to try to get their vaccinations in the community. If you believe you are currently eligible to receive a vaccine (active faculty aged 75 or above) or will soon be eligible to receive a vaccine (active faculty aged 65 and above) and have not been contacted, please email covid19-vaccine@ucsb.edu to inquire.

In the meantime, you may receive an even earlier invitation to make an appointment from the County, or another medical provider or pharmacy… if you do, please take advantage of this opportunity. You can also sign up to be notified when you are eligible to make an appointment for vaccination using the MyTurn system (the system is not yet live in SB County, but you can still register). If you receive a vaccine off campus, you will be able to report your non-UC vaccination to UC Santa
Barbara. The overall goal is to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible.

Vaccination procedures on campus

Eligible faculty who receive an email invitation from SHS must respond by making an appointment promptly (within 48 hours), or their vaccine may be offered to another eligible person. In this event, you will need to email covid19-vaccine@ucsb.edu to have your name re-added to the priority list. You will not be able to choose which type of vaccine you are given since the campus has, thus far, only been given the Moderna vaccine. After your vaccination, you will be required to stay on-site for 15-30 minutes to ensure that you do not experience an immediate adverse reaction.

Faculty members who have been vaccinated by UC Santa Barbara will receive another email invitation when their second vaccine dose is available. Medical experts and public health officials believe the timing of the second dose can be delayed slightly (by a few weeks) without negative effect on immunity, so there is some flexibility in timing. Finally, because building individual immunity takes time, and herd immunity takes even longer to reach, other safety measures like hand washing, wearing a face covering, and maintaining social distance of 6 feet or more, will continue to be required for everyone (vaccinated or not) on campus for some time yet.

Outlook

More vaccines have just been allocated to SHS to provide the second dose vaccinations needed by our healthcare-related workers and eligible faculty who have already received their first dose. For everyone else, we understand that the pace of vaccination remains frustratingly slow. In our County, vaccination of non-health-care workers under the age of 75 has not started yet, and the media are reporting that there are still tens of thousands of people in this age group in Santa Barbara County who have yet to be offered the vaccine.

In the meantime, UC Santa Barbara representatives have provided UC Health with the number of employees (including faculty, staff, and researchers) who are authorized to be on campus and are enrolled in the daily COVID-19 symptom screening survey. The goal is to ensure vaccination opportunities are eventually provided to all UC faculty, staff, and students who want them. Until these vaccines become available, faculty should continue to follow safety protocols and can take advantage of the free asymptomatic COVID-19 testing offered on campus.

I will keep you informed of any major new developments. You can also check the Senate website for information.

Stay safe,
Susannah Scott