January 3, 2022

IMPORTANT MESSAGES FOR FACULTY AND STAFF

To: CAM Faculty & Staff
From: Larry Kaptain, Dean

Greetings for another year and another reactivation of our important work that supports the creative industries in so many ways. Several important things:

Please read the Chancellor’s Message carefully, as it contains essential information about the dorm move-in, the modality for classes, labs, and studios (for the 1st two weeks), a requirement for COVID Booster shots, and a message about the victims of the fires near Boulder. Regarding new COVID protocols, these include a new booster requirement and our plans to have virtual classes for the first two weeks of the semester before we return in person on Monday, Jan. 31. Staff who can work remotely are expected to do so for the next four weeks (with Supervisor consultation), returning in-person on Jan. 31st.

1) As of now (Monday, January 3rd) we are unaware of any fatalities or serious injuries to CU Denver faculty and staff in the Louisville and Superior areas that were stricken by fires. Our CAM faculty and staff had uneven experiences—one family losing everything material in the fast-moving fire. Others were more fortunate. This past weekend the Chancellor’s Cabinet and Deans were activated to ascertain needs of faculty and staff victims in this disaster. Of the 4 CAM people living in that area, one family lost their home and contents. There is a process of determining immediate need that is ongoing. Dr. Monique Snowden and her team are surveying the students who live in that area. Anecdotally, we know of at least one student who was living in a home lost to the fires. I know that we all want to help, but right now there is triage and assessment of what the needs are. When we learn more it will be passed on.

2) The search committee for the MEIS Chair position met right before break and forwarded the name of a preferred finalist. As we have done with other leadership searches, there will be a 45-minute open forum, so that I may gather information and add to the extensive process that we started in the Fall. Topic: MEIS Chair Search Open Forum Jan 10, 2022, 11:00 AM Mountain https://ucdenver.zoom.us/j/5500013374

3) Chancellor Marks is hosting a “Community Conversations: COVID” virtual discussion on Tuesday, Jan. 11 from 10-11 a.m. The Zoom link is embedded in the Chancellor’s Message of today, January 3rd, 2022.

4) We have not set a date and time for a welcome back meeting, as we want to respect your time as the new semester gets settled and we are all more grounded.

The challenges Colorado has faced/is facing (shootings, fires, COVID) are significant, but artists/creators/scholars not only provide vital first-stage support to foster individual creative self-awareness, expression, and personal growth -- but also to motivate our community to reach out and explore the potential of emerging areas of public consciousness. I believe that encouraging the development of “creative fluency” will also lead us, as we continue to challenge cultural and social barriers wherever we encounter them, to record, through our scholarship and art, the vibrant dynamics of our society, and to recognize our inherent accountability as active and necessary contributors to this culture. At the University of Colorado Denver let’s all recommit to increase the visibility of our creative actions and accomplishments and place more emphasis upon the sort of unique, interdisciplinary collaborations that establish enabling mechanisms for the healing we need and will gain through wider public access to education, culture, design, and the arts. Thank you for all you are doing!
Dear Lynx Community,

2021 was a hard year. And not just because of all the challenges from COVID. Most recently, my heart aches for the victims of the tragic shootings in Denver and Lakewood, as well as those who were impacted last week by the most destructive fire in state history. With all of these difficult times, I hope everyone gives each other grace and takes care of themselves and their families.

COVID, and specifically the Omicron variant, continues to spread rapidly through the United States. The Colorado COVID-19 Modeling Group, led by Dr. Jon Samet, dean of the Colorado School of Public Health, just today said that it expects COVID-19 hospital demand to increase sharply in the days ahead and that reported case numbers will likely exceed prior peaks within two weeks. Based on these projections and everything we know now, I want to share the following decisions, which I believe give us our best shot to keep our community healthy and achieve the long-term goal of having a successful semester.

- **Booster requirement:** A COVID booster shot will be required for all students, faculty, and staff beginning Jan. 31, 2022. If it has been less than six months since your last COVID vaccine, you will be required to get the booster within one month of eligibility.

- **Remote learning:** Our spring semester will begin as planned on Tuesday, Jan. 18 and our campus will be open. However, classes for the first two weeks of the semester (Jan. 18-28) will be taught remotely. Staff able to work remotely will do so for the next four weeks and should talk with their supervisors about specific arrangements. We will return to in-person work and instruction on Monday, Jan. 31.

- **Community conversations:** To share greater detail on these decisions and to answer your questions, we will hold a "Community Conversations: COVID" virtual discussion on Tuesday, Jan. 11 from 10-11 a.m.

Before we close out the calendar year, I want to thank you for your persistence and resilience in 2021. You are the fabric of our Lynx Community. Let’s stick together and take care of one another. 

Booster Requirement

It's critical that we take every measure possible to slow the spread of COVID. Omicron is spreading more rapidly than prior variants and has the potential to overwhelm the supply of hospital beds around the state. Not only are we concerned about the threat to the health of our Lynx community, but the burden on health care providers and the potential that the state's hospitals will be stretched to capacity. Together, we can and will do more to prevent severe cases from occurring.
about the health impacts, but also the cascading absenteeism that may impact operations across the region, including in K-12 schools and transportation. We can't just think about CU Denver—we need to be considerate community members and do our part to help our neighbors and the medical system.

As such, after consulting with public health experts and my Cabinet, we decided that requiring boosters would be a critical way we can keep ourselves healthy, stem the spread of new cases, and reduce hospitalization rates. I’m pleased that more than half of our employees have received booster shots so far. Over the next week, you'll receive further details from the Lynx Together team on how to comply. But for now, if you haven’t received your booster shot yet, please start making plans. You can schedule your free booster shot at the Health Center at Auraria or through many other providers in the metro Denver area. Going forward, CU Denver will consider our campus community members “fully vaccinated” if they have received the original dose(s) of the COVID vaccine plus a booster.

Remote Learning

Limiting in-person contact for the first two weeks of the semester is the safest decision we can make at this time. The current models for Colorado show our Omicron cases peaking in mid-January before coming back down. I know so many of us are eager to resume on-campus learning, and based on what we know right now, we believe we can accomplish this by the end of the month.

Faculty will lead classes remotely from Jan. 18 to 28. I fully understand that this move to two weeks of remote instruction is not ideal and will create additional work for our students, faculty, and staff. We notified everyone of this possibility before the holiday break and wanted to share our final decision with as much notice as possible. Certain courses, such as labs and studios, can continue in-person with our existing safety requirements, including face coverings. However, if a student feels safer not coming to campus, they cannot be penalized for this decision. As such, I would highly encourage faculty to move the in-person components of labs and studios to later this semester. Resources to support faculty are available on the Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning website. You can book appointments now with CETL staff for further guidance.

We have every intention of going back to in-person instruction starting Jan. 31 and continuing in that format until the end of the spring semester. Of course, we will stay connected with public health officials and make the best decisions in the name of safety if COVID case counts continue to rise.

Jan. 11 Community Conversations

Please join me on Jan. 11 from 10-11 a.m. for the “Community Conversations: COVID” virtual discussion. Please register here. I'll be joined by several campus leaders, including Chris Puckett and Dean Pamela Jansma, co-chairs of the Lynx
Together Task Force. They'll provide greater detail on our decision-making, review the latest COVID data, explain our safety protocols, and take your questions.

Other Updates

- **Residence halls and dining:** These facilities will remain open as previously scheduled. Residential students can move in Jan. 14 (new students) and Jan. 14-17 (returning students). Employees working in these facilities will be required to have a negative COVID test before they begin work. Before returning to campus, all on-campus residents will be required to show a negative COVID test and be subject to ongoing testing. More details are available in an email sent to residents before the break.

- **Safer masks:** With the highly contagious nature of the Omicron variant, public health experts now say that you should upgrade from cloth face coverings. Following their lead, we highly recommend you use a surgical mask or KN95 mask to better protect yourself and others. As we did throughout the fall, we plan to provide surgical masks at locations on campus. We’ll also evaluate the availability of KN95s.

- **Get COVID testing:** As many people return from holiday travels, we encourage you to get a COVID test. Testing is free and you can schedule same-day appointments at the 5th Street Garage. Results are typically available within 36 hours. Other sites for testing are available from your healthcare provider and COVIDCheckColorado.

- **Order at-home tests:** Request at-home tests from CDPHE. Although they have limitations and shouldn’t be used for diagnosis, they offer a level of information and protection.

- **Self-report symptoms:** If you have any symptoms, please use our self-report form to get support.

In closing, I’m just as tired of COVID as anyone else. But after what we expect to be a particularly challenging January, I do feel hopeful about 2022. Some medical experts have already said that the worst with the Omicron variant should be over by February. And almost two years into this pandemic, we have learned how to manage a temporary shift to virtual learning until we can be together on campus safely. I’m particularly proud of the way our campus community has responded to these COVID challenges. We have smart safety protocols in place to be as careful as possible. I ask for your cooperation, again, so we can all get through this together. Thank you for your support, perseverance, and collaboration.

Lynx, we can do this. Together.

Michelle Marks