



Rhode Island Office of the
Postsecondary Commissioner

Shannon W. Gilkey, EdD, Commissioner

TO: Frank Sánchez, President, Rhode Island College
Meghan Hughes, President, Community College of Rhode Island

FROM: Shannon W. Gilkey, Commissioner of Postsecondary Education

DATE: January 18, 2022

RE: Council Policy on Covid-19 Vaccinations for Students S-21

At its meeting on January 12, 2022, the Council approved the attached amendment to its COVID-19 Vaccinations of Students Policy. This amendment modifies the Council's Policy to require a booster shot in addition to the Covid-19 vaccination for all students at Rhode Island College and the Community College of Rhode Island who wish to live, learn, or conduct research on our campuses, or access campus resources. All students should be required to be fully vaccinated and have received a booster shot, if eligible, prior to the beginning of the spring semester, subject to legally recognized medical exemptions, and/or legally recognized disability or religious accommodations.

As you finalize your plans for implementation, we ask that you share those with this office. In addition, we ask that you share an update regarding your progress in the implementation of this amended policy with this Office and provide an update to the Council as part of your president's report at the next scheduled CPE meeting.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS of STUDENTS
Rhode Island Council on Postsecondary Education

Adopted: 07/07/21 (CPE)

Amendment Adopted: 1/12/22 (CPE)

POLICY

The Rhode Island Council on Postsecondary Education recognizes the toll that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the country, the states, and the Rhode Island public institutions of postsecondary education. Now that vaccines for COVID-19 are available to the citizens of this state and throughout the country, there is ample opportunity for everyone to be vaccinated. The public institutions for postsecondary education have transitioning back to in-person learning and on-campus student activity, and a return to normalcy, and they are now attempting to address the rise in COVID-19 cases due to variants such as Delta and Omicron.

Our efforts must continue to focus on offering students a safe in-person college experience. To that end, the Council believes that students who wish to live, learn, or conduct research on our campuses, or access campus resources should be required to be fully vaccinated and have received a booster shot, if eligible, prior to the beginning of the spring semester, subject to legally recognized medical exemptions, and/or legally recognized disability or religious accommodations. Individuals are eligible for a booster five months after their initial Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna two-shot series, or two months after the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.¹ The three approved vaccinations and the booster shots have been deemed safe by the FDA, are widely available, and both the CDC and the Rhode Island Department of Health are recommending that individuals get vaccinated against COVID-19 and also receive a booster shot when they are eligible to do so.

In addition, since our goal is to have the spring 2022 semester at Rhode Island College and the Community College of Rhode Island remain as close to pre-pandemic status as possible, it is imperative that faculty and staff also get vaccinated and receive a booster shot as soon as they are eligible.

PRACTICES

Rhode Island College and the Community College of Rhode Island shall immediately take steps to notify their student bodies that they will be required to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and have received a booster shot, when eligible, pursuant to Rhode Island Department of Health protocols and requirements, prior to the start of the spring 2022 semester, subject to legally recognized medical exemptions, and/or legally recognized disability or religious accommodations.

The Colleges may implement other requirements regarding the COVID-19 vaccination and the booster shots that may be related to or required by their mission, programs and housing situation, including, but not limited to establishing procedures and requirements for those students who have legally recognized medical exemptions, and/or legally recognized disability or religious accommodations, or who have not been fully vaccinated and/or received a booster shot prior to a date the institution establishes prior to the start of the spring 2022 semester.

The Council recommends that the Colleges provide proper and advanced notification to their students of this policy and the institutions' specific additional procedures, practices, requirements, and deadlines. It is also acknowledged that this Council policy and the policies and practices at the Colleges may need

¹ These time periods are based upon current CDC recommendations and are therefore subject to change in the future.

to be amended based upon future developments regarding the status of the COVID-19 pandemic within the state and elsewhere. To that end, the Commissioner of Postsecondary Education is hereby authorized to modify and/or amend this policy as may be necessary to address future developments and conditions regarding COVID-19 at the Colleges and within the state. The Commissioner shall report any such modifications to the Council at its next regular meeting following the effective date of any such modification/amendment.

This Policy, as amended, will take effect upon its adoption by the Council.