Below is the statement issued by the fifteen Community College Presidents:

Now that all Massachusetts residents 16+ are eligible to access appointments, we strongly urge our students, employees, and all in our college communities to receive a COVID-19 vaccination as soon as they are able. Top health officials for the state and the country, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and our community leaders have all demonstrated that the available vaccines are not only safe but are the most effective way to limit the spread of the coronavirus. The vaccines currently being administered have met the Food and Drug Administration’s rigorous scientific standards for safety, effectiveness, and manufacturing quality needed to support emergency use authorization. Millions of people in the United States have already received COVID-19 vaccines, and these vaccines will continue to undergo the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.

Last year, we all made the difficult decision to significantly limit in-person services and primarily offer remote and online learning opportunities to keep our communities safe. We share the optimism of many throughout higher education as we view the current public health trends. We know that many of our dedicated faculty, staff, and students have been anxiously waiting their turn in the vaccination queue. At the same time, we continue to move ahead toward a safe and increased face-to-face presence at our campuses to meet the “new normal of campus operations” in the upcoming fall. Widespread vaccinations and continued safety precautions will allow our colleges to safely repopulate our campuses and continue to offer the high-quality education that our students want and deserve. As we have shown throughout this pandemic, campus planning will always be guided, first and foremost, by the health and safety of our entire college community.

Considerations for the fall semester continue to develop and are subject to change, but the community colleges are not contemplating COVID-19 vaccine mandates at this time. It is essential that we meet the needs of all of our students, who are often from the communities hit hardest by this pandemic and facing disproportionate access to the COVID-19 vaccine. And now, it is more important than ever to prioritize equity, and creating additional barriers for our students would go against our critically important mission of open access for all.