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Community College presidents: No vaccine mandate

HOLYOKE – In a joint statement, the presidents of all 15 community colleges in Massachusetts said that none of their colleges will require students, faculty and staff to receive a COVID-19 vaccination before returning to campus for in-person classes, although vaccinations will be strongly encouraged.

“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,” the presidents said in the statement released Tuesday through the Massachusetts

Association of Community Colleges.

For the fall 2021 semester Holyoke Community College, for one, is offering some 400 classes across the curriculum that will meet on campus at least part time for in-person instruction, with many meeting as much as 100 percent in person. HCC will also continue to offer fully online classes and blended remote classes for students who might be more comfortable with those options.

“We are aware that some residential colleges have announced vaccine mandates for students before they return to campus,” HCC president Christina Royal said in a separate statement. “As

of this moment, HCC does not have such a policy for students who elect to take in-person classes in the fall. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have followed health and safety guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and the state Dept. of Public Health, in consultation with our legal counsel, and we will continue to do so going forward.”

Most classes at HCC have been meeting online or remotely since the pandemic started in March 2020.

“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,” the joint statement from the community college presidents concludes. “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.”

The full statement from the 15 community college presidents in Massachusetts is attached.
