

# COALITION FOR ACADEMIC JUSTICE



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Decisions made by the University of Arizona about re-opening campus in fall 2020 impact not only those directly associated with the university but also the broader Pima County community. The Coalition for Academic Justice (CAJUA) affirms a commitment to the health, safety and well-being of students, employees and southern Arizona neighbors, especially those who are at greater risk of contracting and incurring serious complications from COVID-19, including marginalized groups such as Black, Indigenous and Latinx populations.

The proposed use of a date-based timeline for stages of re-entry is counter to all public health experts' recommendations; this includes national and international viral pandemic experts, the AZ Public Health Association, and the Pima County Health Department. Decisions with respect to re-entry must be based on specific health metrics, NOT on calendar dates and only data emerging from consistent or increased levels of testing is acceptable. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) needs to adopt and make public the health metrics—and scientifically based acceptable levels for each metric—that will be employed to make re-entry decisions. These should include, but are not limited to, data representing current COVID-19 disease incidence, prevalence and mortality; healthcare facility and workforce capacity; and public health tracking and prevention, which are referenced by the county health department in its [Pima County Progress Report](#) (PCPR). This report is updated weekly and can be found at <https://webcms.pima.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=568644>.

Of the 9 metrics on the PCPR, 6 are currently at red levels (criteria not met; unacceptable) and 3 are at yellow levels (progress on criteria). Alarming, all disease metrics (cases, hospitalizations and deaths) are red (7/29/20). There has been NO improvement in these ratings since July 21, 2020.

**The 9 metrics from the PCPR that we want followed as an institution residing within Pima County are:**

1. **Decreasing cases over 2 consecutive weeks:** The COVID-19 virus can have an incubation period of 14 days (or up to 24 days in some cases), so any measures of case prevalence must allow *at least 2 weeks* to determine improvements in community transmission. Establishing a wait period of only 1 week in between phases of a staged re-entry are counter to this important reality and counter to epidemiologist's recommendation of a 3-week interval.

2. **Decreasing COVID-19 related deaths over 14 days:** Because an increase in death rates occurs even after case rates might decrease, the number of new cases alone is not representative of COVID spread.
3. **Decreasing hospitalizations:** President Robbins has noted that there will be positive cases on campus and that some of those who contract the disease will require hospitalization. Beds for students, staff, and faculty who become ill will be required and beds must also be available for those with non-COVID-related health problems.
4. **Lab testing availability and utilization:** All UA students and employees should have free on-campus access to regular COVID testing (antibody and viral testing). 90% of samples must be returned by laboratories within 72 hours of specimen collection. When results are delayed past this time, they fail to provide current data on disease transmission to use for decision making regarding re-opening.
5. **Adequate hospital bed capacity to care for 2x the current COVID cases (+surge) –Statewide:** There must be sufficient hospital resources to attend to current conditions as well as any uptick in cases as will likely be the case if UA campus is to reopen to in-person interactions.
6. **Sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) for emergency responders:** Emergency responders must have ready-access to the requested equipment to safeguard themselves, their family and friends against COVID-19, or we will lose a critically essential contingent of people who selflessly serve as the frontline against this virus.
7. **Timely case investigation:** To prevent the spread of COVID-19, positive cases need to be investigated within 48 hours to identify exposure locations, and to obtain a list of off and on-campus contacts and activity history. This is particularly pressing for people working or studying on-campus in environments of 10+ people or where physical distancing is not possible.
8. **Testing of symptomatic contacts within 48 hours:** Symptomatic and asymptomatic contacts must be notified, tested, monitored and strongly encouraged to self-isolate while waiting on test results to limit the spread of COVID-19.
9. **Facilities/support for patients who can't be discharged home – Statewide:** Infected people who cannot return home as is the case for most international and out-of-state students as well as students/employees who are members of families with underlying health conditions or at greater risk of severe illness (e.g. BIPOC and the elderly) require long-term resources. A campus "infirmary" is untenable: when people become seriously ill, they will need urgent medical care, hospitalization and ICU beds in community facilities led by a range of qualified medical professionals.

In addition, we support [the 4 metrics](#) confirmed by the Arizona Public Health Association (AZPHA) and the School Nurse Organization of Arizona as recommendations for safe opening of schools.

Given the changing nature of the virus and limited understanding of antibody protections, there needs to be a re-exit plan in place prior to re-opening so that if there is a resurgence of COVID-19 in the UA community, the university is able to close down safely and with as little disruption as possible. Students and employees must be provided access to equitable remote study and work conditions that do not require them to disclose their private health information. Only when the University of Arizona and surrounding Pima County community meet all these criteria *could* a protocol for in-person instruction be implemented, following [higher education health guidelines](#).

In community,  
The Coalition for Academic Justice (CAJUA)