

# **PULSE SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS**

## **WHAT CAMPUSES ARE SAYING ABOUT COVID-19 AS WE APPROACH 2022**

**Survey Period: November 11–22, 2021**



AMERICAN  
COLLEGE  
HEALTH  
ASSOCIATION

# **PULSE SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS: WHAT CAMPUSES ARE SAYING ABOUT COVID-19 AS WE APPROACH 2022**

**Survey Period: November 11–22, 2021**

ACHA conducted a pulse survey between November 11 and November 22, 2021, to gather information about COVID-19 surveillance testing, booster policies, mask policies, and contact tracing as colleges prepare for winter quarter/spring semester 2022. Information was collected to provide benchmarking and helps guide ACHA and other national and state leadership groups as they continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Key findings regarding winter/spring plans:**

- Almost three quarters of respondents report plans to perform surveillance testing of students (page 3).
- Most campuses are recommending boosters for all eligible populations. At the time of the survey, very few campuses report plans to require boosters (page 4).
- There was even split between those planning to have a mask requirement (n=122, 43.4%) and those who are unsure (n=121, 43.1%). Only 13% of respondents indicated they would not have a mask requirement (page 5).
- Of those schools planning to have a mask requirement, the majority plan to require masks in all indoor spaces (page 5).
- Schools that have been doing contact tracing plan to continue that practice (page 6).

## **About the Survey Respondents**

Responses were solicited from 900 individuals from unique institutions. These individuals were either representatives from member institutions or individual members from non-member institutions. Responses from emeritus and sustaining ACHA members were not solicited. Of the 900 individuals contacted to participate in the survey, 283 responded, representing a response rate of 31.4%.

## Demographics

The demographics of the participants and their institutions were as follows:

<b>Institutional Attributes</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Public	137	48.4%
Private	146	51.6%
2-year	18	6.4%
4-year	264	93.3%

<b>Locale</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Urban	151	53.4%
Suburban	63	22.3%
Town	60	21.2%
Rural	9	3.2%

<b>Geographic Region</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Northeast	75	26.5%
Midwest	70	24.7%
South	90	31.8%
West	48	17.0%

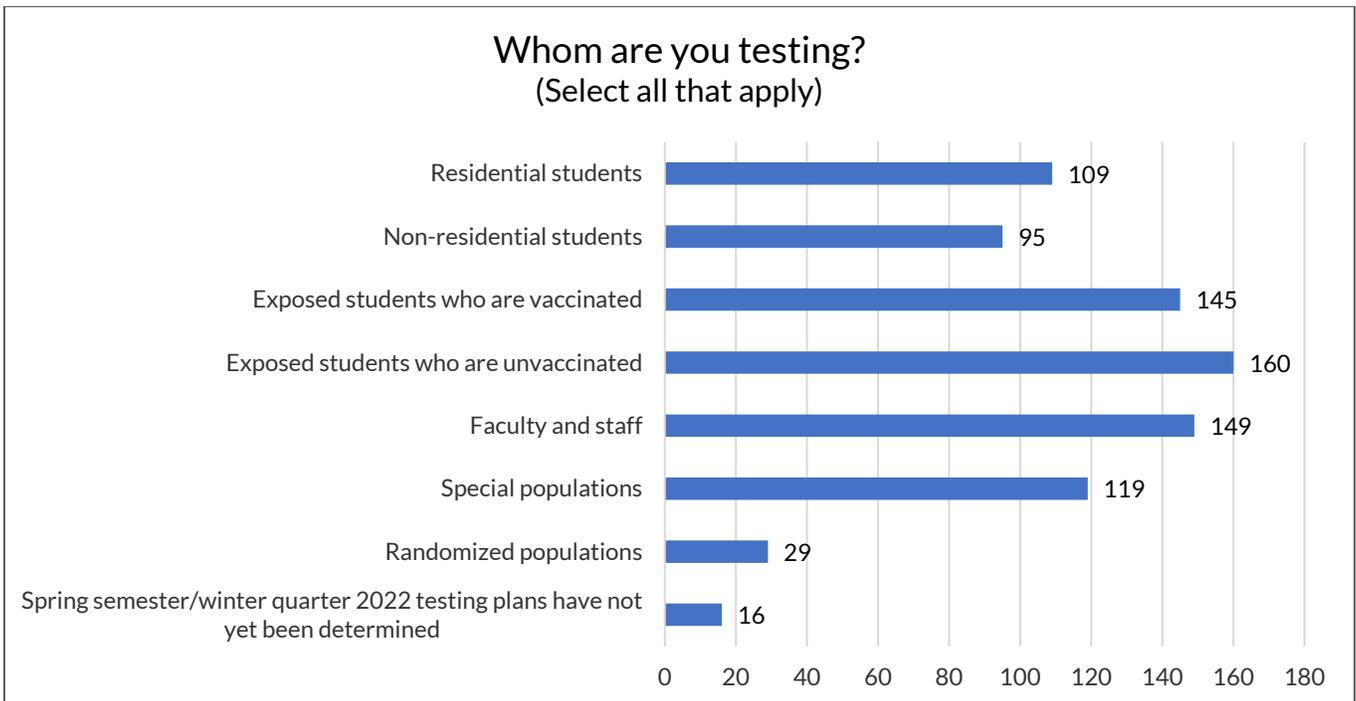
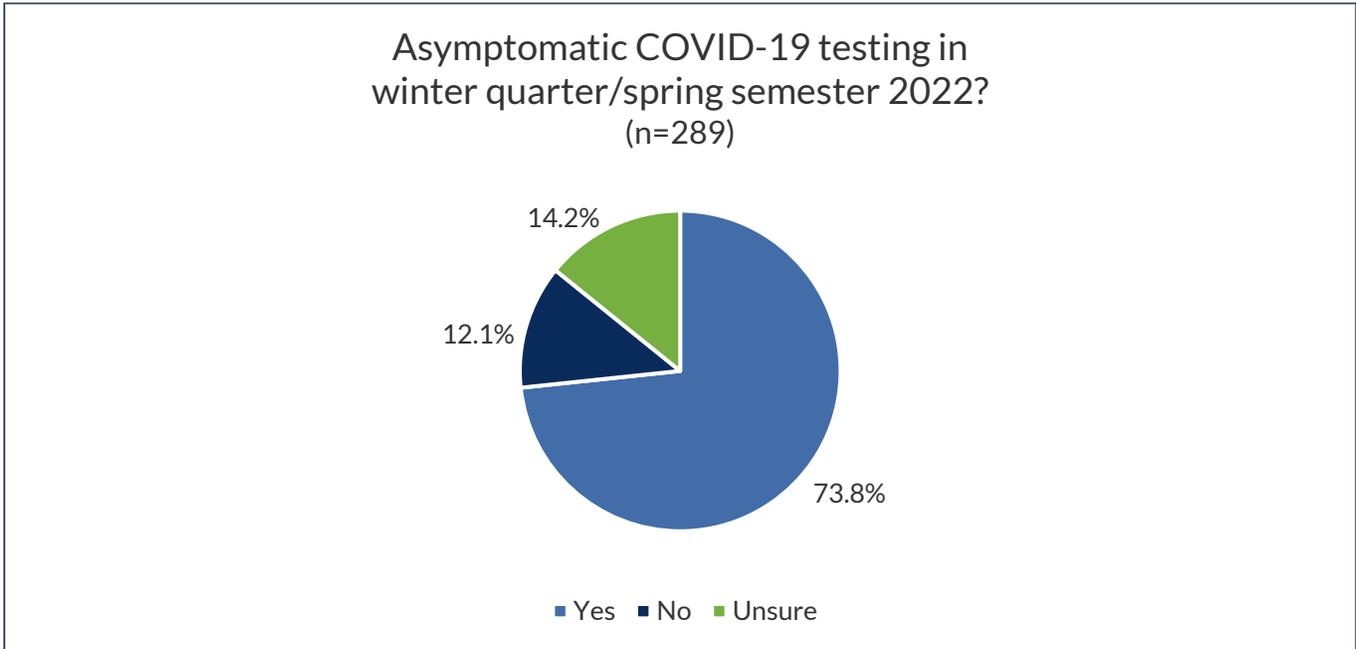
<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Less than 2,500	60	21.2%
2,500–4,999	53	18.7%
5,000–9,999	50	17.7%
10,000–19,999	51	18.0%
20,000 or more	69	24.4%

The majority of respondents were from urban institutions of higher education (53.4%), with only 3.2% from rural campuses (as defined by IPEDS). There was broad representation from the four geographic regions, with less representation from Western campuses. All campus sizes were represented, with 40% of respondents hailing from institutions of higher education with fewer than 5,000 students, about 36% of respondents coming from mid-sized institutions and almost 25% of respondents coming from large institutions with 20,000 or more students.

## Asymptomatic Surveillance Testing for Winter/Spring 2022

Based on data from the previous [ACHA member survey](#), it appears that most colleges providing health services are currently performing SARS-CoV-2 testing on symptomatic students. What is less clear is the prevalence of asymptomatic surveillance testing practices. Therefore, in this survey, respondents were asked about their plans for asymptomatic testing for winter/spring 2022.

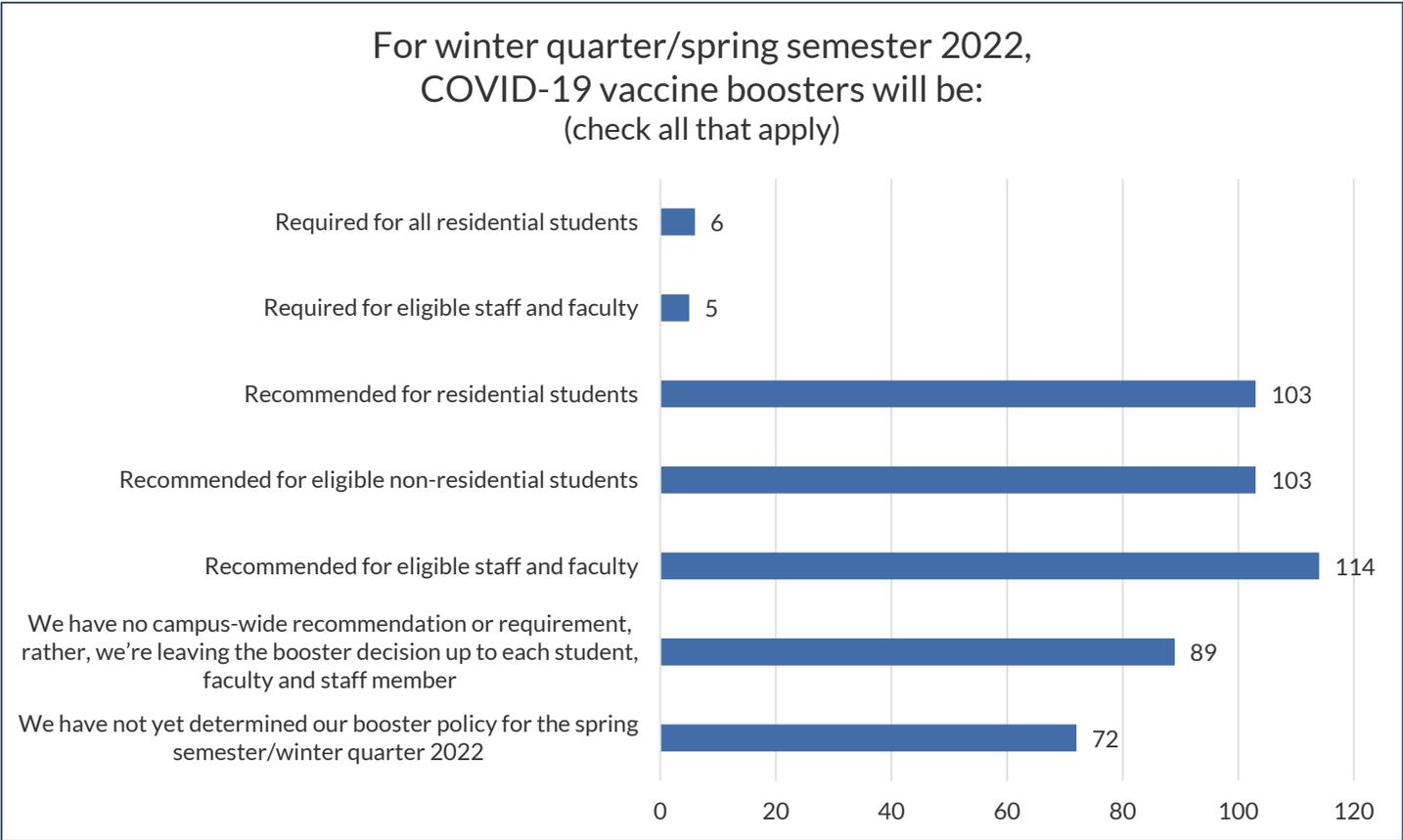
**Will you provide asymptomatic COVID-19 testing in winter quarter/spring semester 2022? If yes, whom are you testing? If no, why not?**



Survey participants who responded “yes” to planning to provide asymptomatic testing (n=208, 73.5%) further reported that their plans are to perform SARS-CoV-2 testing for students who are exposed whether they are vaccinated (n=145) or not (n=160). Testing is also being planned for special populations of students (n=119, 57.2%) as well as residential (n=109, 52.4%) and non-residential students (n=95, 45.7%). In addition, 149 schools (71.6%) reported plans to test faculty and staff.

Of the schools that responded that they do not plan to test (n=33, 11.7%), 14 (42.4%) indicated that they had already discontinued their asymptomatic testing program, another 14 indicated that they never had an asymptomatic testing program in place and 5 (15.2%) indicated that they planned to discontinue the testing program for the upcoming term 2022. Finally, 40 respondents (14.2%) noted that their testing plans had not yet been determined.

### COVID-19 Booster Policies for Winter/Spring 2022



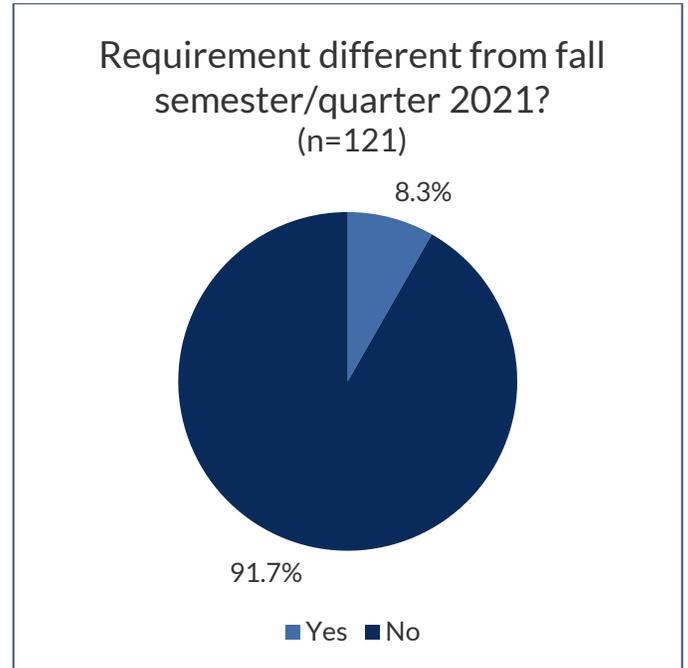
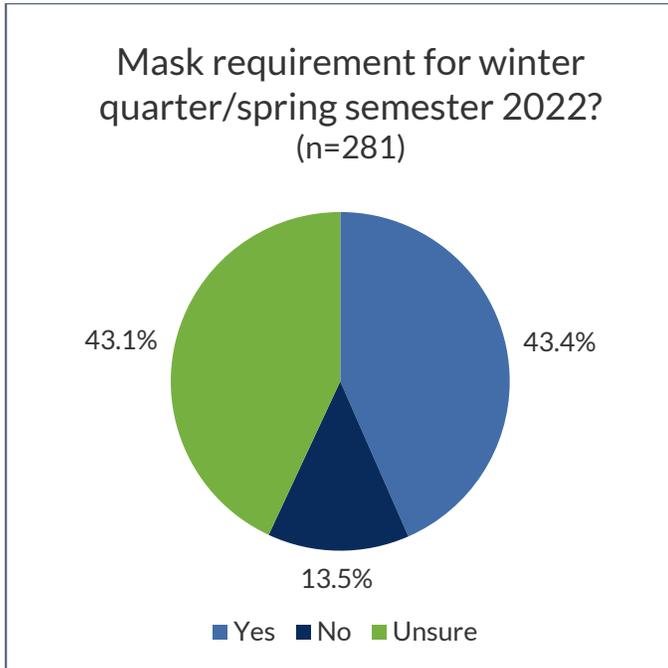
Booster recommendations continue to be fluid. Very few respondents report plans to require booster doses. Overwhelmingly, campuses plan to recommend boosters to eligible populations. Of note, 89 respondents (31.4%) reported no plans to recommend or require boosters and 72 respondents (25.4%) reported that their booster policies are not settled yet.

Complicating matters is the change in booster guidance that occurred November 19, 2021, near the end of the survey period. At that time, CDC released guidance stating that individuals 18 and older **may** receive a COVID-19 booster six months after completing their primary COVID-19 vaccination series and at least 2 months after completing the Johnson and Johnson/Janssen primary COVID-19 vaccination. A review of the responses received before and after this announcement took place, but it was determined that the announcement had no measurable effect on booster policy as reported here. However, one week after the close of this survey period, the CDC again changed its booster guidance stating that individuals 18 and older **should** receive a COVID-19 booster. This may affect campus booster policies. Additionally, campus policies may change if CDC modifies its definition of “fully vaccinated” to include booster doses and/or if there is an uptick in cases due to Omicron or other variants.

## Mask Requirements for Winter/Spring 2022

Mask requirements have been the subject of controversy both on and off campuses throughout the pandemic, despite masking being a reliable public health mitigation strategy and a key element of a layered prevention strategy. In order to gauge current and planned strategies related to masking, we asked if schools planned to have a mask requirement for winter/spring 2022 and if their plans represented a change from the fall. For those indicating that they planned to utilize this mitigation effort, parameters related to the requirement were elicited.

**Will your campus have a mask requirement for spring semester/winter quarter 2022? If yes, is the requirement different from the fall semester/quarter 2021 requirement? Please list the requirement. If no, why not?**



Of the 281 respondents to this question, 43.4% (n=121) responded that they will have a mask requirement and 43.1% (n=121) responded that they were unsure. Only 13% (n=38) of respondents indicated that they will not have a mask requirement. The vast majority of schools planning to have a mask requirement (n=111, 91.7%) indicated that the mask requirement for winter/spring 2022 will remain the same as the one in place for fall 2021.

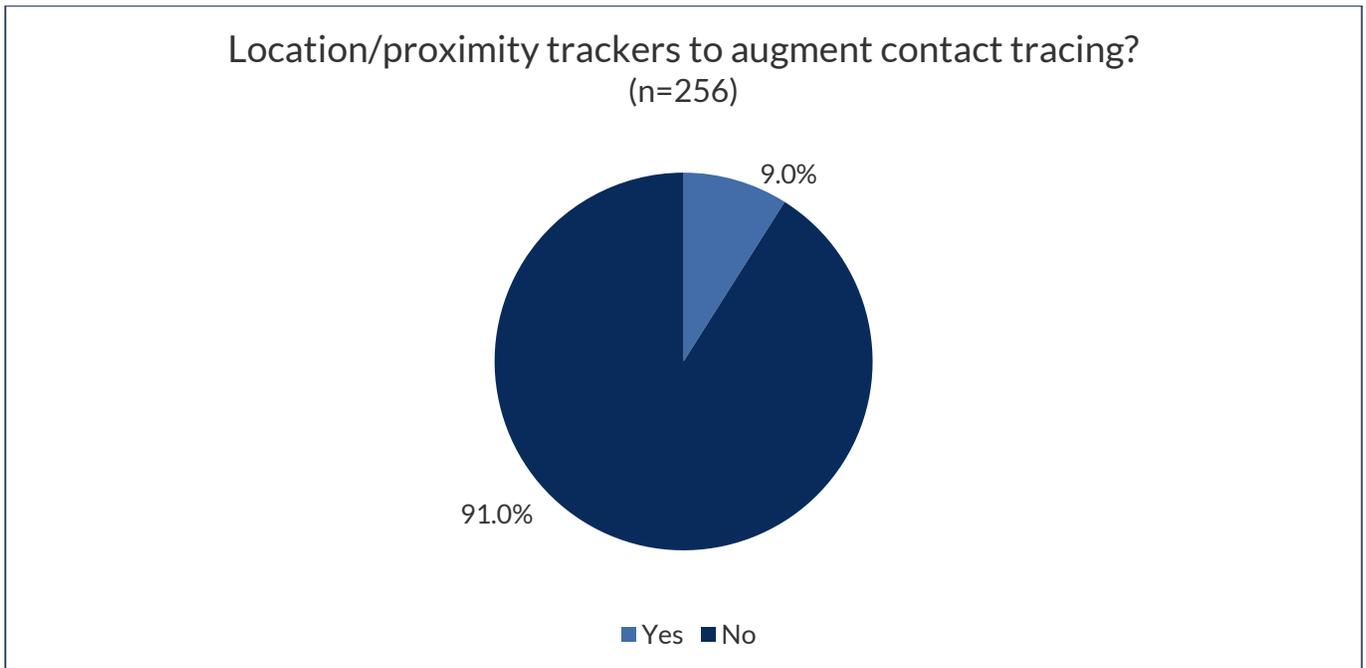
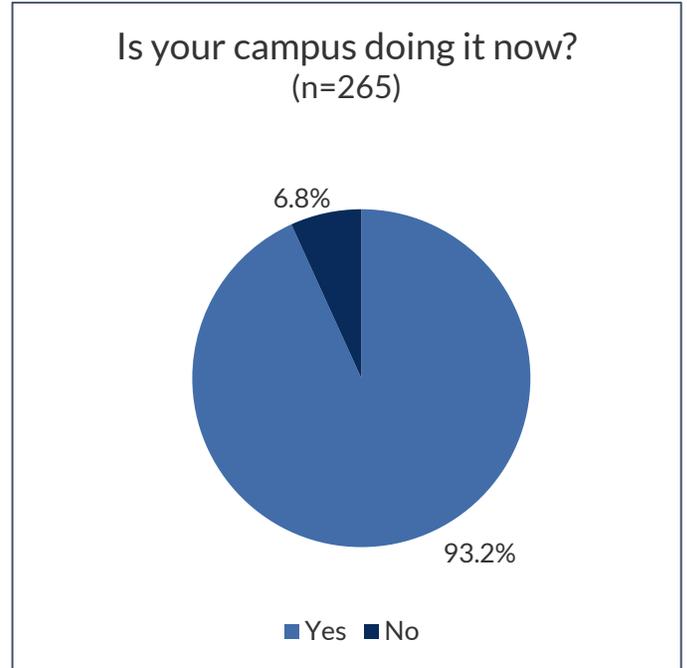
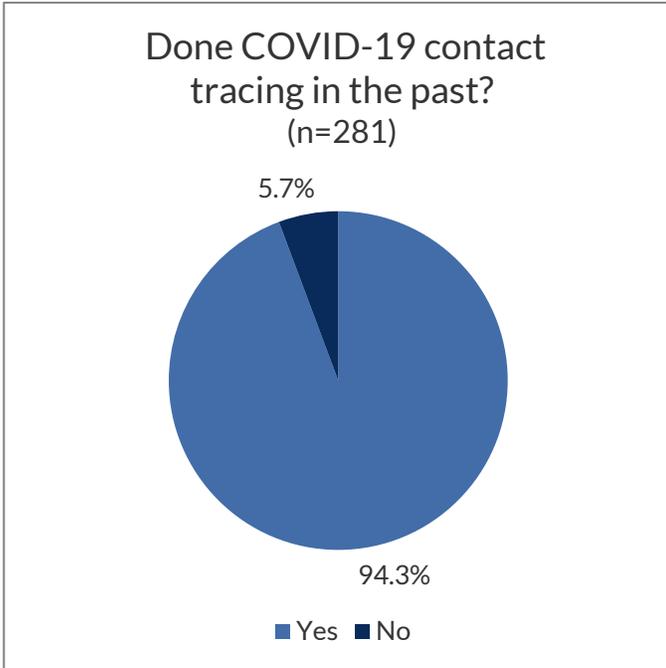
When asked to provide more specifics about the nature of the mask requirement, of the schools that will be requiring a mask, the majority (n=80, 66%) indicated that masks will be required in all indoor spaces. Twenty percent (n=24) of the respondents planning to require masks indicated that masks would be required in limited indoor situations including classrooms, performance spaces and in residence halls except within a resident's private room. Thirteen percent (n=16) noted that their requirement would include limited indoor public spaces such as classrooms and performance spaces only.

The 38 schools that indicated they will not have a mask requirement for winter/spring term were asked why that would be the case. Of the 35 schools that responded, the majority (n=23, 65.7%) indicated that they have already discontinued the mask requirement. Nine schools (25.7%) indicated that they never had a mask requirement and three schools (8.6%) stated that they plan to discontinue the current requirement in the upcoming winter quarter/spring semester.

## Contact Tracing for Winter/Spring 2022

While contact tracing is an important strategy to contain the spread of infection, it is a resource-intensive activity. Questions regarding contact tracing practices were included to determine the sustainability of this effort on campuses.

**Has your campus done COVID-19 contact tracing in the past? If yes, is your campus doing it now? Are you using location/proximity trackers to augment contact tracing?**



The vast majority of respondents whose campuses have done contact tracing in the past (n= 265, 94.3%) are continuing to do so (n=247, 93.2%). A small number of schools (n=23, 8.1%) are using location/proximity devices to assist in this effort.

## Limitations

The findings of this survey reflect policies and planning at the time of the participants' responses. The pandemic has continued to be unpredictable. During the survey period, the CDC booster recommendation for those 18 and over shifted slightly. On November 29, 2021, CDC stated that those 18 and over should receive a COVID-19 booster. Additionally, the new variant, Omicron, emerged as a variant of concern on November 26, 2021. These factors and others may contribute to changes in colleges' plans for the winter quarter/spring semester.

## Summary and Conclusion

These survey results represent information from respondents regarding planned mitigation strategies for the winter quarter/spring semester 2022 as of the time of submission of survey responses between November 11<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Despite pandemic fatigue and ongoing controversy over some mitigation strategies, the majority of respondents plan to continue in the 2022 winter/spring terms the testing and contact tracing practices currently in use. There is a significant level of uncertainty regarding the continuation of mask requirements for the upcoming school term. Vaccine booster recommendations are heavily favored over booster requirements; this course of action could change if CDC's definition of "fully vaccinated" changes to include booster shots and/or if the number of disease outbreaks increase or the variants show increased morbidity or mortality. As has been the case throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, new developments surface as data is being collected and that has been the case with this survey, as well. Emergence of the Omicron variant and changes in CDC's booster recommendations both occurred during the administration of this survey. The impact of these developments on decisions related to mitigation strategies such as mask requirements, testing and vaccine booster requirements for the winter quarter/semester is, at this time, unknown.



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