



October 7, 2021

Dear Heidelberg Community,

Following a Board of Trustees vote of strong support on October 2, we are announcing that Heidelberg University is adopting a Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Policy to protect the health and well-being of all students, faculty and staff, and to safeguard our campus learning, living and working environments.

***What is the rationale for this decision?***

This policy is based on the recommendation of local, state and national public health officials. It is based largely on the continuing threat of the highly transmissible delta variant that is causing a spike in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths, especially among the younger demographic. Research shows that vaccination remains our best tool to protect ourselves and our community from COVID-19.

U.S. colleges and universities are requiring mandatory COVID-19 vaccination in growing numbers. Nationwide, as of October 5, more than 1,050 public and private institutions are on the list. [Check the updated list here.](#) In Ohio, there are 32 schools requiring vaccination. Heidelberg joins OAC peers Capital University, John Carroll University, Otterbein University, and Wilmington College in requiring vaccination.

In addition, Heidelberg University has a history of requiring student immunizations. The following immunizations are currently required for residential living: Diphtheria/tetanus booster (Tdap) within the past 10 years; Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) two doses; Polio three doses; Varicella (chickenpox) two doses or history of the disease; Hepatitis B vaccine three doses; and a TB test prior to campus arrival if TB screen is positive. We are now adding the COVID-19 vaccination to our list.

The Federal Drug Administration has approved the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine and is in the process of approving the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines.

The United States District Court and the United States Court of Appeals upheld Indiana University's student vaccination mandate in August 2021 and the United States Supreme Court denied injunctive relief of this decision.

***Who does this vaccination mandate apply to?***

The vaccination mandate applies to all students and all employees.

***When does the vaccination mandate take effect?***

Students must be fully vaccinated by January 3, 2022.

Faculty and staff must be fully vaccinated by January 3, 2022.

***What vaccinations are acceptable to meet the vaccination requirement?***

Those who have received two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after receiving the last dose.

***How do I document my vaccination status?***

Students should report their vaccination status to the Stoner Health & Counseling Center by using the [Medicat student health portal](#).

Employees can submit vaccination verification to the Human Resources Department in one of three ways:

1. Email a photo of your vaccination card to the Human Resources Office at [hr@heidelberg.edu](mailto:hr@heidelberg.edu) (preferred).
2. Make a photocopy of your vaccination card and send it to Human Resources via interoffice mail.
3. Bring a photocopy of your vaccination card to the Human Resources Office on the second floor of University Hall.

***If I already reported my vaccination status, do I have to report it again?***

No. If you are a student or an employee who has already provided a copy of your vaccination card, your information is on file and you do not need to resubmit it.

***Will surveillance testing and contact tracing for students and employees continue after the vaccination mandate takes effect?***

Yes. We will continue surveillance testing and contact tracing of unvaccinated students and employees who are granted a medical or religious exemption.

Also, if you develop symptoms of COVID-19, even if you have been fully vaccinated, you should still be tested to ensure everyone's health and well-being.

***Can I take classes online if I don't want to get the vaccine?***

Heidelberg offers a limited number of online classes as an alternative to in-person or hybrid classes. Please consult with the Owen Center for Teaching and Learning to find out if remote learning off campus can work for you.

***Can I request an exemption?***

Students, faculty and staff may request an exemption based on medical or religious reasons. Each request will be considered individually. Those requesting a medical exemption will be required to complete a medical exemption form and provide documentation from their healthcare provider. Stoner Health & Counseling Center will not provide medical exemptions. Those seeking a religious beliefs exemption will be required to complete a separate religious beliefs exemption form. Heidelberg will review each request, make a fair, expeditious and non-discriminatory determination and inform the individual in writing of the status of their request within two weeks.

To request an exemption, please complete the appropriate form:

[Employee Medical Exemption Form](#)

[Employee Religious Beliefs Exemption Form](#)

[Student Medical Exemption Form](#)

[Student Religious Beliefs Exemption Form](#)

***What if I decline to be vaccinated and do not request an exemption?***

Students who are not in compliance by January 3, 2022 will not be allowed on Heidelberg's campus and cannot participate in University classes or other activities. If available, those students may choose online courses to stay enrolled but cannot reside on campus or participate in other activities. Otherwise, students must withdraw their enrollment.

Employees who are not in compliance by January 3, 2022 will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

***Will the mask mandate be lifted once everyone on campus is vaccinated?***

That will depend on the COVID-19 conditions in Seneca County. Heidelberg is following CDC guidance that recommends masking for counties with high or substantial spread of the disease.

***If I am granted an exemption, do I still need to wear a mask?***

Yes. Students who have been granted exemptions will still be required to wear a mask. For employees with a qualifying exemption, accommodations will be made on a case by case basis. Such accommodations can include but are not limited to wearing masks, weekly testing, assignment of private workstations, alternate scheduling to minimize exposure, extended social distancing protocols, or even remote work arrangements for employees.

***What about the booster? Will Heidelberg require that?***

We are monitoring information and guidance about booster vaccines, which are evolving quickly. We'll continue to share information and decisions in a timely manner.

***What if COVID-19 conditions change? Will Heidelberg modify its policies?***

Health guidelines and industry best practices evolve as new information comes to light. Heidelberg reserves the right to modify this policy at any time. It is up to University administration to adapt to changing circumstances and business needs, consistent with our commitment to prioritize a safe and healthy campus.

So far, Heidelberg's vaccination rate is well above local and state averages, and close to the national average. We are thankful for that, but it is not enough. This new vaccine mandate, combined with our current requirement to wear masks indoors as well as outdoors where social distancing cannot be maintained, will offer us the highest level of protection and the greatest opportunity to continue to offer in-person classes and our full menu of co-curricular programs/events and extracurricular athletics programming and other activities.

Students who have questions or concerns should contact the Dean of Student Affairs Office or Stoner Health & Counseling Center. Employees should contact your SLT member or Human Resources.

With the implementation of our Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccine Policy, all of us at Heidelberg University should look forward to a healthier and safer campus community focused on the educational well-being of our students.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully,

Robert H. Huntington  
President

Cc: Heidelberg Senior Leadership Team  
Ms. Janelle Baldosser, Director of the Stoner Health & Counseling Center  
Ms. Kathy Geier, Chair of the Heidelberg Board of Trustees