Dear Einstein Community:

With commencement and the formal end of our academic year only a week away, I wanted to alert everyone about some upcoming COVID-related announcements.

Last week, our senior leadership team at Einstein released updated policies covering occupancy levels for labs whose members are all fully vaccinated. Later in the week, the CDC issued less restrictive mask guidelines for individuals who have been fully vaccinated. Governor Cuomo initially indicated concerns about the pace with which the switch in masking guidelines were changing—but has since announced New York would adopt them for most business and public settings.

These differing perspectives demonstrate how nearly every issue concerning COVID-19 remains fluid. Because we must comply with New York State guidelines, we will be reviewing them as they are released to determine how to update our own policies.

For example, we will soon provide further detail regarding lab occupancy, including guidance for labs in which all faculty, students, and postdocs are fully vaccinated, as well as for those that include individuals who are not. Our decisions will factor in data that we continue to collect regarding the number of individuals in the Einstein community who have been vaccinated (the number, based on current respondents, is 85%) and have provided proof of vaccination. Later today, you will receive a notice reminding you to upload your Vaccination Record Card if you have not already done so.

We expect to also issue updated guidelines and policies on a broader range of COVID-related policies, including those for: students, employees, visitors to campus, outdoor events, graduation, and travel. In addition, we will elaborate on
the process we intend to follow to restore all operations and campus presence to the levels in place prior to the pandemic. As we ramp up operations, we will continue to prioritize the health and safety of our entire Einstein community and strongly encourage everyone to get vaccinated, as well as to continue the practices of mask wearing and social distancing in all areas of our campus until the process of verifying vaccination status is completed.

I will discuss these and other issues during my next dean’s chat, which is scheduled for next Tuesday, May 25, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; I will be joined by Drs. Josh Nosanchuk, Rick Kitsis, and Harris Goldstein—all of whom have been actively involved in formulating our COVID-19 policies and guidelines. You can access the chat via Zoom.

In conclusion, I encourage you to tune in on Thursday, May 27, to our commencement. I expect it to be an exciting occasion, in part because Dr. David Kessler will be our keynote speaker. You may recall that Dr. Kessler was commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration under Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. He is now a key figure in establishing and executing the Biden administration’s COVID-response strategy, and he has deep ties to Einstein and Montefiore. He represents another example of how those associated with both our institutions play such a vital, positive role in our society.

Sincerely,

Gordon F. Tomaselli, M.D.
The Marilyn and Stanley M. Katz Dean
Albert Einstein College of Medicine
Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer
Montefiore Medicine