

U-HIGH MIDWAY

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Student vaccination rate at ‘excellent place’

Comfort levels vary among students regarding current virus mitigations

by **LUCIA KOURI**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mask-mandate, delta, break-through — words of summer 2021. As the fully in-person school year approached, one word in particular was on the mind of many people: vaccination. Though more than 98% of eligible Laboratory Schools students are vaccinated, many are beginning the school year with varying comfort levels about safety precautions.

In a letter sent to parents on Aug. 13, Interim Director David Magill outlined the COVID-19 expectations and precautions that will be taken this school year. The University of Chicago is not mandating vaccination for Lab students, but it is strongly encouraged for students 12 and older. In addition, all employees, vendors and volunteers are expected to get vaccinated unless they have received an authorized exemption.

Even though COVID-19 vaccinations are not required, nearly 99% of students eligible for vaccines were fully vaccinated by the first day of school, according to an additional email sent to parents Sept. 1. Nurse Mary Toledo-Treviño estimated a total of five to 10 high school students who are not fully vaccinated. These students will undergo weekly screening testing.

Principal Paul Beekmeyer stated that U-High is at an excellent place when it comes to vaccinations.

In line with mandates from the university and Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, all students and adults are required to wear a mask while indoors, except while eating or drinking. When eating, vaccinated U-High students are expected to stay three feet apart, while unvaccinated or partially vaccinated students are required to stay six feet apart.

98-99%

The number of high school students who were fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of the first day of school.

OTHER FAST FACTS:

Masks are required indoors at all times when not eating or drinking.

Students are permitted to eat lunch in Café Lab, in designated club meeting rooms, outside, or in the new tent on Scammon Garden. They may also get carry out from a local restaurant or go home.

When eating, vaccinated students are expected to stay three feet apart, while students who are not fully vaccinated must stay six feet apart.

Outdoors, students are permitted to take off their masks for most events on school property.

Unvaccinated students will be tested weekly.

High vaccination rates are particularly crucial at a school with younger students who cannot yet get vaccinated, according to senior Emma Baker.

“As the pandemic has progressed, we’ve seen how lethal it is, and recently there’s been a lot of studies on how it affects adolescents,” Emma said. “Especially since there is a Lab community that is not vaccinated — 12 and under — I think it’s the responsibility of high school



MIDWAY PHOTO BY MALCOLM TAYLOR

RUNNING START. Members of the cross country team run a lap around Jackman Field at the first-day assembly Sept. 9. The rest of U-High’s fall sports teams joined in the pep rally. Even though the assembly was outdoors, students were required to wear masks.

students to be vaccinated.”

Even with the high vaccination rate, senior Ben Sachs wondered the extent to which guidelines for these few unvaccinated students are being enforced.

“The one thing I do have an issue with is that I feel like it is not being necessarily controlled — like I don’t know that the unvaccinated people are actually sitting farther apart.”

Ninth grader Zarak Siddiqi said the guidelines could have been

more strictly enforced in his classes, even with so few unvaccinated students. Specifically, he noticed the three-foot rule was not enforced in some cases.

On the other hand, junior Maile Nacu said the school’s high vaccination rates and safety precautions, such as the mask mandate, were enough to make her feel safe.

“I think the school’s being pretty cautious, even though they’re not requiring a vaccine,” Maile said.

“Knowing that a lot of our school is vaccinated, I think it’s a good thing to kind of move in the direction of going back to how we normally were, even though there are people who aren’t vaccinated.”

While the future is uncertain, Ms. Toledo-Treviño said that, for now, the low number of unvaccinated students is worth recognition.

“We can literally count it in two hands,” she said. “That’s phenomenal.”

28 students join U-High; financial support stable

by **PETER PU**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

U-High welcomed 20 ninth graders, four sophomores, three juniors and one senior for the 2021-22 school year.

While enrollment remains in flux, 625 students are enrolled in U-High and 2,201 students in all of the Laboratory Schools.

The return to routine in-person learning accompanies the return of almost all students who temporarily withdrew in the 2021-22 school year, according to Brent LaRowe, director of registrar Services and Information Management. The withdrawal option has made essentially no impact on this year’s enrollment.

“Our number of withdrawals and new students is remarkably similar to years past. Our families’ commitment to Lab is both humbling and inspiring,” Mr. LaRowe wrote in an email to the Midway.

According to Mr. LaRowe, enrollment at other Chicago private schools like Latin School of Chicago, St. Ignatius College Prep and Francis W. Parker School has also

remained stable.

High school tuition for 2021-22 increased 3.9% to \$38,376, following the rolled-back 2.73% markup last school year. Lab issued about \$4 million of financial aid this year, and the ability to meet aid demands of families is increasing, according to Irene Reed, executive director of admissions and financial aid.

Emergency financial aid requests increased last year with some parents’ employers announcing layoffs, but Ms. Reed said year-long financial aid requests have remained largely stable. Non-tuition costs are a challenge for families. These costs vary based on student commitment, such as extracurricular activities and extended day.

“We can’t act like the tuition is the only cost of attending Lab,” Ms. Reed said. “I think that’s a good takeaway. Families are asked to do much more than that.”

It remains to be seen whether families will submit a similar number of emergency aid requests this year, according to Ms. Reed.

VARSITY BOYS SOCCER



MIDWAY PHOTO BY ANDREW BURKE-STEVENSON

GAME PREP. Sophomore Mahin Schneider (center) attempts to intercept senior Phillip Kellermeier during boys varsity soccer practice Sept. 9 at Jackman Field. The team was practicing for its Sept. 10 away game against Francis W. Parker School in an effort to break U-High’s two-game losing streak. The Maroons’s record this season is 3-3.

New faces in FACULTY

Recruits from diverse backgrounds introduce themselves to U-High

By **PETER PU**, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF • CONTRIBUTIONS BY LUCIA KOURI & BERK OTO

What makes you excited about your subject, and why do you like teaching it?

What is one thing that students should know about you?

What makes you excited about your subject, and why do you like teaching it?

What is one thing that students should know about you?

KIMBERLY ALLIGOOD

Spanish

Ms. Alligood taught Spanish at Francis W. Parker School and ChiArts in the past year. Before that, she taught at the Solebury School in New Hope, Pennsylvania for seven years.



"I really love how diverse Spanish speaking communities are around the world. There's so many different countries and cities with their own unique history, their own accents obviously, vocabulary, traditions, all of that."

"I do care about them [students] as people first, not just students who are taking my class, obviously, and even if I have high expectations for the work that they do in my class, I think I'm also a pretty accommodating, understanding teacher."

GABRIEL BAKER

History

Dr. Baker taught history at The Nueva Upper School in San Mateo, California, for three years and The University of Iowa for seven years.



"I like sort of engaging with these ideas about why communities come together, like what allows communities to form because they're kind of miraculous in a lot of ways because they're weird, like the way we cooperate."

"I play a lot of RPGs, both pen and paper, like D&D and Blades in the Dark and also video games as well. My favorite kind of RPG that I played would be Mass Effect. My wife's playing the Final Fantasy."

LUCY BIEDERMAN

Writing Specialist

Dr. Biederman, a 1999 alumna, taught writing at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio, for three years. She authored "The Walmart Book of the Dead," inspired by trips to the Oriental Institute.



"Writing is a way to think and to be and to understand the world and to understand yourself, so through working with other people's writing, students or grownups or anyone, I get to know other people and the ways people know and understand themselves."

"I know the kind of pressure that Lab students can put on their own writing, and my goal here is to help people find a way to release and relieve some of that pressure."

KATIE CLENDENNING

Service Learning Coordinator

Ms. Clendenning managed volunteer programs at Habitat for Humanity for five years and planned service projects at Chicago Cares for six years.



"To see the world through somebody else's viewpoint for just a little while, I think that's important for all of us to do, especially this day and age, and so I'm excited to get to be a part of the 10th graders doing that and hopefully more students."

"I volunteer a lot with kids, with young kids elementary aged and preschool aged kids, and I love reading, and I'm always up for good book suggestions, or I'm also currently looking for podcast suggestions."

ANITA DEBARLABEN

Computer Science

Ms. Debarlaben taught math and computer science at Loyola Academy for five years and wrote software at companies like General Electric and Northrop Grumman for over 18 years.



"I was writing software for a lot of different companies and noticing that students who I talked to, when I went to the high schools, were really hesitant to try it, and I started feeling like it would be great to be a teacher and maybe reach those students."

"I play volleyball. I'm a big volleyball player. I have three children who are graduating from different colleges and different careers, like if they [students] want to know about different colleges."

RICHARD DEL RIO

History

Dr. Del Rio conducted research in the history of pharmaceuticals within the Department of Behavioral Science and Social Medicine at the Florida State University College of Medicine.



"[In research] you have a tendency to focus on one topic for so long that sometimes you feel somewhat rigid. I think just on a personal point, I think teaching is an opportunity for me to kind of flex muscles I haven't flexed in a while."

"I know in an institution like this grades are very important, and I respect that, but for me, what's important to me is that what students learn here empowers them."

W. DANIELLE JONES

English

Ms. Jones is pursuing her doctorate in English Language and Literature, with a focus in African American literature, at the University of Chicago.



"We can kind of use words and storytelling to not only create. We can use it to create the world that we kind of want to see but also kind of venture into someone else's world that we don't necessarily get to experience firsthand."

"I'm a fraternal twin. He's [Donald] is a boy twin, so that we're not like the fun, identical kind of twins, where we switch places and everything, but I think that's kind of a fun thing."

DIANE NEAD

Math

Ms. Nead taught math at Lewis University for two years and Morgan Park Academy for one year. Her past courses have covered topics like statistics, calculus and geometry.



"I've always just loved math. Math and science have been my favorite subjects. And I like teaching strange math: how math is applied to the real world. When I worked on my master's, I did a research paper on chaos theory."

"I've had a pet tarantula for the last 10 years. It used to be my classroom pet, although I don't think the math department will let me bring my tarantula here."

KEVIN NIHILL

Science

Dr. Nihill taught chemistry at North Central College for two years and conducted research in atmospheric chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for three years.



"It's just these huge instruments that are crazy, and you get to play with all sorts of different things and just explore things that you would never have the chance or the opportunity to do on your own."

"I love trivia. I go to bar trivia, when bars are open and safe to go obviously. I love watching jeopardy. I love all those trivia game shows, and I've tried to work as much of it as possible in the class, never for any stakes."

ARMANDO ORTIZ

Spanish

Mr. Ortiz has taught Spanish since 2007 at institutions such as Northwestern University, Loyola University and Triton College. He has substituted at Lab since 2016.



"As you keep using it [Spanish] and as you keep studying more and more about it, you're discovering how beautiful it is, how extensive. In school, you don't really learn the whole thing. It's just the basics."

"I like to make my students feel comfortable, not only with the language, but also with me. I always believe that if my students don't feel comfortable with me as a person, then they might not be happy being in my classroom."

PETER SAMUELS

History

Dr. Samuels taught history at The State University of New York Geneseo for three years and Kenyon College for two years. His past courses have covered history from South Asia.



"I spent different parts of my life in England and in India, which is where my folks were from, and so understanding history and culture was a way of understanding myself, and I'm lucky that I get to do it as my job as well."

"I am a cricket enthusiast. I am a fan of the sport. I play it less now than I did when I was a bit younger, so that's one of my main obsessions."

PHILLIP SUDDERBERG

English

Mr. Sudderberg worked at the University of Illinois Chicago for two years. He taught ninth grade writing courses and did marketing work at the Institute for the Humanities.



"Reading and writing obviously teach great critical life skills, but then they also do this cool other thing, which is teach you how to be critical of those critical life skills, or how to think outside of those boundaries and frameworks as well."

"I play music. I think at this point, I almost played a show in all 50 states, just about there. I play drum set."

New administrators to support U-High community



Tori Jueds

Victoria Jueds was the head of school at Westtown School in West Chester, Pennsylvania, since 2017. Before that, she was the senior associate dean of undergraduate students at Princeton University. Ms. Jueds' favorite interactions with students are the random ones. She is interested in people's stories and backgrounds. Ms. Jueds is a professionally trained singer has both a dog and cat.



Nicole Williams

Nicole Williams served as the senior research analyst at UChicago Consortium on School Research. She researched programs in Chicago Public Schools and wrote frameworks for student success. Her current agenda is engaging with diversity, equity and inclusion peer facilitators and leading professional development. She likes to read fiction and spend time by the lake.



Zilkia Rivera-Vazquez

Zilkia Rivera-Vazquez taught comparative government and politics and history at Commonwealth-Parkville School in San Juan, Puerto Rico, since 2019. She has taken both administrative and teaching positions during her career. As assistant principal, she enjoys talking to students and helping teachers support students. She plays piano and likes watching films like "Sound of Metal" and "Attack on Titan."