



# U-HIGH MIDWAY

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## 2022 brings relief, anxiety

### Lab implements COVID-19 testing, delays classes

by **WILLIAM TAN**  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

With increasing spread of a new coronavirus variant, in-person classes recently delayed to Jan. 10 and new weekly COVID-19 testing protocol systems implemented, students and faculty have had to adjust and adapt to 2022's first challenges.

The decisions to change the start of school and to implement testing were made by the administration with support from the Faculty Association. Due to the rise of the omicron variant and the ease of virus transmissibility, the administration thought it best to delay classes one week to accommodate the influx of COVID-19 cases from winter break.

During this week, 144 students and employees tested positive for COVID-19 or reported a positive test.

Many teachers have reacted appreciatively regarding the new mitigation measures for their health benefits.

"I think the measures taken by the administration here will help with keeping students in school and help mitigate the spread [of COVID-19]," Faculty Association president Jim Catlett, a science teacher, said.

Math teacher Jane Canright echoed Mr. Catlett's sentiment, as she had become anxious as COVID-19 infection rates began trending upward during the holidays.

"I was glad that the school had made a decision and was being proactive about the return to school after the holidays, because I had, in watching the news, become kind of anxious just because the return was so close to, you know, Jan. 3," she said.

Ms. Canright was also impressed with the new testing process, as she had not expected the first test to go so smoothly.

"It was not chaotic at all, and I was very pleasantly surprised by that," she said about her test on Jan. 3. "I didn't have to wait, they knew exactly what to have me do. I was in and out really fast. I was pleased with all of that."

### — JUST A THOUGHT —

## During class discussions, don't shut down different perspectives, ideas

by **AUDREY PARK**  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

In a recent Harkness discussion, a student proposed the idea that "cancel culture" can be productive, an idea which was instantly rejected by the student's peers and the teacher. The teacher repudiated the student's suggestion, and the class continued without further discussion.

U-High classrooms should welcome true free expression where all perspectives can be heard and discussed before being judged.

Students should listen to all their peers' opinions, especially ones that contrast with their own, before formulating judgment. In a course that encourages the participation of all beliefs, the interference of the teacher, the authority figure in the classroom, is hypocritical. The dominant opinion is granted with a

feeling of validation, while the outlier is confronted with judgement. In turn, such behavior is perpetuated, thus creating an environment of a singular way of thinking — or what is called today an echo chamber.

There is power in active debate that could conclude in new insight for both positions. Meaningful and constructive discussion is necessary for a productive academic environment. When a topic is introduced, regardless of how controversial it is, students should not completely dismiss the idea but should be open and able to hear the opposing side.



Audrey Park



MIDWAY PHOTO BY ANDREW BURKE-STEVENSON

**DROOL AND SCHOOL.** Senior Yannik Leuz and sophomore Marlena Leuz fill sample tubes in Lower Kovler Gymnasium Jan. 4. Students and employees will take a COVID-19 test every Friday.

Sophomore Yolo Martinez was relieved to receive the news, as it provided her time "to get [her] life a lot more together."

However, one concern for Yolo was how the rest of the semester would play out academically and how teachers would plan their curriculum to fit the revised semester schedule, which will now end Feb. 4.

Many teachers have already met and decided plans for the next few weeks, with some teachers making small revisions in curriculum while others opted to not assign homework the week of Jan. 3.

After the P.E. Department met with the administration to discuss classes moving forward, they decided to rearrange some units to plan less strenuous exercises for the next few weeks. These included activities such as pilates, yoga, CPR, volleyball, and health and fitness units.

"The activities we have coming up we feel are what we have been asked to do: keep things a little less

strenuous, a little less heavy breathing, a little less max-effort types of activities," P.E. department chair Scott Budeselich said. "So that's really what we're going to do going forward."

While not an official decision, most math teachers decided to hold off giving homework the week of Jan. 3.

Ms. Canright said, "For me, the reason was since the semester's pushed back a week and I've already planned all my classes until the end of this semester, and I already have a schedule for what I'm trying to do, it doesn't really help me to have kids do work this week."

Mr. Catlett also chose not to assign work this week.

"I would prefer to be in person to explain the concept. And then also recognizing that students may be, you know, dealing with some of their own issues about COVID-19 or travel," Mr. Catlett said. "So I made the decision. I thought it would be best to go and pause with instruction."

Music classes will continue in the new year, with choral music classes now being held in the tent on Scammon Garden north of Gordon Parks Arts Hall. However, one major change is that all wind instrumentalists in band class will not be able to play for six weeks.

Ninth grader Jaya Alenghat, who plays clarinet, finds the restrictions unfortunate but needed.

"I think there would be no point if band continued the way it was since having that many people in the same room without their masks is a lot. It's very risky. So it's unfortunate," she said.

Overall, the beginning of 2022 has warranted large changes in COVID-19 mitigation measures, but Ms. Canright is grateful for the new testing process and to University of Chicago resources.

"We're very lucky, I will say, with our Faculty Association and with the university and the access to this testing," she said, "because I'm sure there's a lot of schools struggling to figure out how to do any[thing]."

## Safety measures address new COVID-19 variant

Recommended safety measures to prevent transmission are evolving to include a reduced quarantine period, tighter-fitting masks and greater booster shot eligibility.

"There's this new variant that's behaving differently than previous variants, and so some of what we used to do is helpful, but some of it probably needs tweaking," Emily Landon, chief epidemiologist at the University of Chicago, said in an interview with the Midway. Dr. Landon advises UChicago and the Laboratory Schools on coronavirus safety measures.

Lab and the Chicago Department of Public Health will follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's shortened the recommended quarantine and isolation period for individuals who test positive to five days.

The CDC and the Food and Drug Administration also expanded booster shot eligibility to 12- to 15-year-olds. Lab will host a booster shot clinic Jan. 14, 3:30-6 p.m. in Upper Kovler Gymnasium. Call 773-834-8221 to schedule an appointment. Booster shots are now required for UChicago employees.

Health officials and school administrators advise the use of tighter-fitting masks, such as N95, KN95 and KF94. KN95 masks have been distributed to Lab community members. According to Dr. Landon, when wearing flat surgical or cloth masks, double-masking is most effective in sealing the respiratory droplets and aerosols.

Faculty members will be consistently enforcing mask-wearing. Students who don't comply after the first request will be referred to Dean of Students Ana Campos to track and contact the student and their parent/guardian.

Café Lab's seating capacity has been reduced, and students may also eat lunch in other locations around school as long as they maintain 5-to-6 feet of distance and remain silent while eating, according to an email from high school Principal Paul Beekmeyer. The administration has requested that students not eat during advisory period.

Dr. Landon said, "We're all really sick of Covid, and we need to think about what's the minimum we can do to reasonably protect our community around us."

— TÉA TAMBURRO

## Wellness survey should avoid lumping students of color in single BIPOC group

by **SAHANA UNNI**  
CONTENT MANAGER

The results of the 2021 health and wellness survey released Nov. 17 misrepresent the U-High student profile. A pie chart displayed data concerning the racial diversity of U-High with categories "White/Caucasian," "BIPOC" and "Unspecified." "BIPOC" refers to all students of color, who make up about 49% of U-High.

The wellness survey grouping all Black, Indigenous and people of color together in one category of survey results creates a lack of transparency about the small percentage of Black students currently attending U-High, and doesn't allow the administration to truly understand different races' "feelings of well-comeness at Lab."

In a neighborhood that is 26.4% Black as of

2019, the student body being only 9% Black is a concerning statistic that isn't being addressed. The wellness survey is presented as an accurate representation of students' mental and physical health, but without distinguishing between Black, Indigenous and other people of color, the data becomes skewed by racial groups that have a larger presence at Lab.



Sahana Unni

As the wellness survey continues to change to meet the needs of the student body, it must differentiate among racial groups in order to better understand and address problems facing specific demographic groups.



# Same rules, more adherence in sports

Only immediate family spectators will be allowed at home games

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

With athletic team practices and physical education classes resuming Jan. 10 and competitions resuming Jan. 17, students are responsible for meeting stricter mask-wearing and social distancing expectations. Competitions will resume, but no outside spectators besides athletes' parents are siblings are allowed to attend until Feb. 14.

The new athletic expectations are part of the COVID-19 mitigation guidelines, following the rise of infection rates of the omicron variant and the overload of hospitals.

"The main modification is simply a very strict adherence to the mask wearing," David Ribbens, athletics director, said. "I think that that was a little bit lax in November and December to the extent that it was not followed as strictly as we need it to be followed."

Physical education classes will involve lower intensity activities, while still requiring students to stay masked. The fitness center remains open for use, under the same mask-wearing rules. While SHIELD testing took place in Kovler Gymnasium during the Jan. 3 initiation week, testing will be moved to Gordon Parks Arts Hall to not interfere with classes.

However, as interscholastic team competitions resume Jan. 17, Mr. Ribbens expects that with higher intensity sports like basketball, players from other teams may



MIDWAY PHOTO BY ANDREW BURKE-STEVENSON

**NEW YEAR, NO NEW RULES.** After the extended break, where classes were delayed until Jan. 10, U-High athletes have returned to their sports with more attention to mask-wearing and social distancing expectations like at this game in December.

not follow the same mask-wearing rules.

"It is difficult," Mr. Ribbens said. "I mean, basketball, particularly obviously, when you're exerting yourself like that and having to wear a mask. It's going to pose a challenge for the kids."

Athletes should check the Lab-

oratory Schools athletics page, as games are being rescheduled and will continue to be rescheduled.

As these new guidelines may remind students of distance learning in 2020, when in-person physical education and team practices were not possible.

Mr. Ribbens said that students

should not take for granted the opportunity to participate in athletics at Lab.

"We're hopeful that the students realize that if we really do a poor job of executing and not following the masking, it could be taken away again," Mr. Ribbens said, "and that would really be a shame."

**"We're hopeful that ... if we really do a poor job of executing and not following the masking, it could be taken away again."**

— DAVID RIBBENS,  
ATHLETICS DIRECTOR

## Fresh take on Spider-Man surpasses expectations

by **ETHAN SWINGER**  
REPORTER

For the past few weeks, discussions raving about "Spider-Man: No Way Home" could be heard daily, followed by pleas not to spoil the movie. The web-slinging hero has been starring in movies for nearly two decades, and his iconic story has been portrayed countless times. I thought, "Could a movie about Spider-Man have anything new to offer?" To put it simply, yes.

"Spider-Man: No Way Home" surpasses all expectations of what a Spider-Man movie can be, providing a fresh take on a character whose backstory has been retold far too often.

Produced by Marvel Studios and Columbia Pictures, the film covers protagonist Peter Parker's struggle to balance his personal life with his newfound global fame after his identity was revealed to the world. He seeks help from sorcerer Doctor Strange, who casts a spell to erase all knowledge of Peter Parker's identity Spider-Man yet to no avail. The stakes become significantly higher after this botched spell brings back villains that Peter and his friends have to defeat, testing Peter's ability to fulfill his responsibility as Spider-Man. The movie gripped me throughout its two and a half hours run time, with steady and consistent pacing. Its themes of responsibility and heroism are clear and resonate strongly without being clichéd.

Although "Spider-Man: No Way Home" exceeds expectations, Peter's irrationality and poor decision making, while reflective of his inexperience and age, can be irritating. Additionally, the introduction



SOURCE: SONY

**MARVELOUS RETURN.** Marvel Studios' "Spider-Man: No Way Home" surpasses original expectations by building on the original franchise. The film strikes a near-perfect balance between action-packed fighting scenes and gripping emotional exchanges.

of all-powerful spells and a readily accessible multiverse marks a substantial progression for the future of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Yet they're not without flaws, bringing questions as to why these spells weren't used on past threats or how specific characters are conveniently and inexplicably transported through the multiverse.

Despite the complexity of the cinematic world surrounding the film, "Spider-Man: No Way Home" manages to follow a clear narrative plot while remaining unpredictable. It is also still enjoyable even if

you haven't seen previous movies in the franchise, yet the film's powerful emotional impacts and series-wide repercussions might lack the weight they would otherwise have. A surprisingly strong point of "Spider-Man: No Way Home" is its devastating emotional scenes. The heartfelt moments between Peter Parker, his friends and Aunt May are genuine and purposeful, giving the film a needed emotional impact many superhero films lack.

Its climactic and ambitious ending — a crossover event with heroes and villains from previous

Spider-Man movies — will leave you breathless through its twists and turns. As needed in every superhero film, "Spider-Man: No Way Home" also boasts impressive visuals to rival any other blockbuster movie. "Spider-Man: No Way Home" is almost flawless with the right balance of action-packed fights and just as captivating emotional moments. Bursting with great acting, it cements itself as a fantastic addition to the Spider-Man franchise that will keep you enthralled even after watching it a second time.

## Short skits draw Gen Z

by **CLARE O'CONNOR**  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

"Saturday Night Live" hired Ben Marshall, Martin Herlihy and John Higgins, the three members of comedy group Please Don't Destroy, to write for the show and create one video short every week, hoping the group's brand of short, dense, absurdist humor would make "SNL" more appealing to younger viewers who have grown used to microformats like Vine and TikTok and have been desensitized by overexposure to the internet.

The group's mastery of "Gen Z humor" is evident through their weekly videos and their writing contributions, making the show approachable to a previously disengaged audience.

Their first "SNL" video demonstrates thoughtful writing and particular comedic style, including a new joke about every five seconds of the two-minute skit. The jokes in the video all stem from one simple observation: lots of different companies are making their own brands of hard seltzer. The skit exists in a world where even JCPenney makes its own hard seltzer, and this base joke gets stretched to absurdity as a belt buckle falls out of Martin's mouth and he reveals that their dentist, Dr. Riccardi, also has a hard seltzer brand.

Give this old show a new chance, and watch the Please Don't Destroy's video shorts and a few of the more popular skits from this season. "SNL" is making progress toward adapting traditional media to be more accessible to younger generations.