Cornell Tech COVID-19 Reopening Safety Plan

July 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, on March 13, 2020, Cornell Tech swiftly shifted its operations to a remote / virtual environment. In accordance with public health officials' guidance and recommendations, all academic instruction was migrated to online platforms, staff remote work contingencies were implemented, and all non-essential operations were suspended. Strict guidelines were enacted to safely support the necessary personnel remaining on campus to sustain essential campus functions.

As the New York State (NYS) COVID-19 infection rate continues to decline, the NYS Governor's Office has published a guide for reopening businesses and economic activity. The State has identified seven (7) benchmarks necessary for reopening by region and established four (4) phases of reopening. The full report can be viewed at:

https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/NYForwardReopeningGuide.pdf

Currently, education is part of the businesses or sectors eligible for reopening during phase IV. However, higher education research and higher education administration have been included in phases I & II, respectively. On June 8th, the New York City (NYC) region met the aforementioned benchmarks and entered phase I, on June 22nd it entered phase II, and on July 20th it entered phase IV. Cornell Tech is preparing this plan to enable the eventual safe return of faculty, staff, students, and visitors to the campus. To the extent possible, given its geographic and infection rate disparities, Cornell Tech will coordinate its reopening strategy with Cornell University to ensure compliance with overall university policies. In addition, it will work and partner with other NYC Cornell sites in furtherance of the One Cornell philosophy.

The plan is carefully crafted and takes into account industry best practices and the most up-to-date data and recommendations available from experts in the medical, scientific, and public health fields. Specifically, the plan incorporates guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH). Due to the novel nature of COVID-19 and emerging research, the plan is subject to change to ensure it remains consistent and in compliance with the most current government requirements for reopening and our best understanding for how to safely reopen the campus.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and throughout the campus reopening planning effort, the safety and wellbeing of our campus community is and will continue to be Cornell Tech's top priority. As such, non-pharmaceutical interventions and engineering controls will play a significant role in this plan to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Reopening will only occur with the prerequisite government approvals and in consultation with our Cornell University colleagues. It will be implemented in stages and phased in dependent upon the local public health outlook and within the established safety parameters. Cornell Tech will work closely with its NYC public health partners to ensure it is safe to transition along the stages of reopening. Preapproved contingency plans will also be in place to enable a rapid pause or reversal of reopening initiatives should public health metrics deem it necessary.

The goal of the first stage under NYS's phase I of reopening, will be to bring back limited research which cannot be conducted remotely. Strict safety protocols will be established and adhered to, to ensure a safe work environment within our research spaces. The second stage of reopening under NYS's phase II, will consist of a gradual return of the workforce to prepare for the final stage of bringing students back to campus during NYS's phase IV. Throughout this gradual increase in campus activity, the focus will remain on working and learning remotely whenever possible, protecting our vulnerable community members, and implementing safety measures which have proven to be successful at flattening the curve.

SECTION 1: PEOPLE

I.   **<u>Fall 2020 Operations</u>**

Even after receiving the necessary approvals for engaging in the reopening of the campus, Cornell Tech will generally continue to support remote operations until risk can be safely mitigated to support normal operations. Where feasible, all staff functions and work that can be accomplished remotely will remain off-site. Directors will perform a review of their respective departments and identify roles and functions that may be performed remotely and those that require on-site access. This assessment must be submitted to the Chief Administrative Officer for approval, prior to directing any staff to return to campus.

Research and academic instruction will also remain online to the extent possible. Academic leadership will identify which research areas require on-site access and will require faculty members to prepare safety plans for those research spaces. Appropriate reasons to conduct research on campus include, access to specialized lab equipment, research conducted in support of COVID-19, or research which cannot otherwise be conducted off-site. Individual safety plans must be submitted to the Dean and Vice Provost for approval, prior to authorizing the resumption of any on-site research.

Lab safety plans shall adhere to the following principles:
- All existing lab safety guidelines must be obeyed
- Occupants must attempt to maintain a minimum of six (6) feet of distance between each other at all times
- Occupancy shall never exceed 50% of original space limits
- Staggered and scheduled lab use time to ensure compliance with 50% occupancy limit and social distancing requirements
- Face coverings must be worn at all times
- Single room occupants are not required to wear a face covering, however they must utilize a virtual safety buddy or other approved form of safety monitoring
- Sharing of objects should be limited; gloves should be worn when the sharing of tools and/or equipment is necessary
- Proper hand hygiene must be practiced before and after lab use
- Hard surfaces and equipment shall be disinfected in between use

Given the uncertainty of a possible COVID-19 second wave or seasonal nature, academic leadership will also work with faculty members to determine which courses may be efficiently delivered online, which courses will require in person instruction, and which courses may be taught under a hybrid version or combination thereof. However, it is currently anticipated that the Fall 2020 semester will commence utilizing a hybrid of teaching modalities. Most instruction will take place online, but there will also be small in person instruction that takes place in accordance with all public health guidelines. However, there will be no large in person colloquiums, conferences, seminars, etc. All academic programming proposals will be submitted to the Dean and Vice Provost for final approval.

On campus operations and in person research and instruction will be gradually increased while carefully monitoring the infection rate with our local public health partners. Additional guidance and procedures will be provided through each phase of reopening.

All meetings and events should be conducted virtually. Any necessary small in person meetings must conform to the established social distancing and face covering requirements listed in this document.

II. Surveillance and Screening

Cornell Tech is currently working with Cornell University colleagues, Weill Cornell Medical Center, and other local health services providers, to implement a fast, convenient, and programmatic testing protocol for our community members. In order to return to campus, all faculty, staff, and students must be tested. Cornell Tech faculty are assisting in developing a model that will help inform the testing regime, similar to the model used for the Ithaca campus but taking into account NYC specific data.

At a minimum, residential students will be tested upon arrival to campus and should be prepared to quarantine for fourteen (14) days. Any students arriving from any states that meet the NYS "COVID-19 Travel Advisory" threshold, must quarantine for fourteen (14) days. Surveillance screening will be conducted throughout the Fall 2020 semester as informed by the aforementioned faculty modeling. Students residing off campus will also be required to participate in the testing regime, prior to accessing the campus and having their ID cards activated.

Faculty and staff will continue to support campus operations remotely to the extent possible. Any faculty and staff required to be on campus, must also comply with the testing protocol.

Currently, there are many locations throughout NYC and NYS where diagnostic testing is available:

https://www1.nyc.gov/site/coronavirus/get-tested/covid-19-testing.page
https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/find-test-site-near-you

NYS also requires all employees and visitors to a workplace to complete a mandatory health screening assessment. The assessment must be completed each day prior to entry into the workplace. The current health assessment is conducted electronically via a Daily Check found at: https://dailycheck.cornell.edu/ . Employee health screening guidance can also be found at: https://ehs.cornell.edu/campus-health-safety/occupational-health/covid-19/employee-health-protection-procedure.

Lastly, all employees returning to campus must complete the following online training prior to entering the workplace: https://cornell.sabacloud.com/Saba/Web_spf/NA1PRD0089/app/shared;spf-url=common%2Fledetail%2F0000043204%2Flatestversion

III.   <u>**Monitoring & Isolation**</u>

First and foremost, if you feel sick or ill and/or are symptomatic, please stay home and consult your health care provider prior to returning to school or work. Should you begin to feel ill while in class or in the workplace, immediately notify your supervisor/professor via email or cellphone, leave the building, and contact your physician for medical guidance. Isolation rooms will be designated for those who do not feel well enough to leave the facilities under their own volition. Please note, you must be fever and symptom free for 72 hours (without the aid of medication) prior to returning to work or school.

Cornell Tech will work with the NYCDOHMH to ensure coordination across respective testing and tracing protocols. In order to protect our entire campus community, it is requested that faculty, staff, and students self-disclose any positive COVID-19 test results. Doing so will facilitate supporting our sick community members and will allow for the implementation of protocols to safeguard others from infection. Faculty and staff may disclose to their HR representative and students may disclose to the Student Health & Wellness Manager or the Director of Student Services. Cornell Tech will protect your privacy to the extent possible, while taking steps to ensure the wellbeing of your classmates and colleagues.

Upon confirmation of a positive test result within our campus community, Cornell Tech will work with the NYCDOHMH to ensure the infected person can safely isolate

and will receive all necessary support during the fourteen (14) day quarantine period. A comprehensive contact tracing will take place, along with a workplace disinfecting in accordance with CDC recommendations and Cornell University guidelines.

IV.   <u>Vulnerable / High Risk Groups</u>

Faculty, staff, and students who are at higher risks for COVID-19 complications due to medically identified comorbidities, may seek alternative workplace and/or classroom accommodations. Faculty and staff should contact their HR representative and students should contact Student Disability Services. Cornell Tech will take all reasonable and recommended precautions to provide a safe environment or alternative accommodation.

V.   <u>Travel Restrictions</u>

Due to the inherent and evolving risks associated with traveling abroad or domestically to regions with a high prevalence of COVID-19 community transmission, all Cornell Tech community members are encouraged to avoid all non-essential travel.

Additionally, you will be expected to follow all travel guidelines or restrictions that may be in place as prescribed by the CDC, New York State, NYCDOHMH, U.S. Department of State travel warnings, and Cornell University. Should it be necessary to travel to a high risk region, you may be required to quarantine for a period of 14 days prior to returning to campus.

VI.   <u>Communications</u>

COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus with much yet to be learned. Municipalities are collecting and analyzing data on a daily basis. Doctors and scientists are utilizing this data to conduct research and to produce treatments and eventual vaccines. As a result, there are frequent revisions required to best practices.

Cornell Tech will consistently monitor public health officials' recommendations and ensure that we are implementing the most up-to-date and effective policies to combat disease transmission. The latest guidance will be available at:
https://tech.cornell.edu/coronavirus/

From time to time, it may also be necessary to send information via email. For information of an emergency nature, Cornell Tech will send an emergency mass notification in the form of a Rave system TechAlert.

Faculty and staff should direct any COVID-19 related questions to their immediate supervisors and students should contact Student Wellness & Support or Student Services.

VII. **Contingency Planning**

Should surveillance and screening indicate an increase in the campus community's virus transmission rate, Cornell Tech will consult with its Cornell University colleagues to determine the appropriate steps to reduce in person academic activity while sustaining quality academic continuity.

Every effort will be made to safely support the hybrid instructional model. However, if necessary, Cornell Tech is prepared to return to a fully online teaching platform.

Throughout the Fall 2020 semester, Cornell Tech will also be ready to modify its academic delivery model in compliance with any city, state, or federal mandates.

SECTION II: FACILITIES

I. **Social Distancing**

The most effective form of non-pharmaceutical intervention thus far in combating COVID-19 transmission is the practice of social distancing. It is believed that the primary vector for disease transmission are respiratory droplets suspended in air and transferred between humans. Therefore, the CDC recommends a minimum of six (6) feet of distance between persons at all times.

To accomplish this, Cornell Tech facilities are undergoing a makeover of sorts to limit any instances where building occupants are unable to maintain these new social distancing norms. Signage will be deployed throughout the facilities to give occupants visual cues for distancing and directional flow. In general, pedestrian traffic will flow in a clockwise path to prevent two-way traffic through narrow corridors. Lobby turnstiles will be clearly labeled and identified as entry or exit only and stairwells will be labeled to indicate direction of travel.

Markers will also be utilized to indicate appropriate distances while waiting in line at the Café or while waiting to be screened as a visitor at the security desk. Please be cognizant of visual aids and spatial awareness while on campus.

II. **Face Coverings**

In accordance with NYC and NYS regulations, face coverings must be worn at all times when it may not be possible to maintain six (6) feet of social distancing. However, given the congregate and communal nature of higher education, it is expected that a face covering will be worn at all times by members of the Cornell Tech community when inside a campus facility, unless they are alone inside of a private room or residential dwelling with a closed door.

Upon return to campus, all faculty, staff, and students will be provided a washable and reusable cloth face covering at no cost. However, faculty, staff, and students may wear their own face covering provided it fits snugly around the face and covers their nose and mouth. Disposable face coverings will be available at the Bloomberg Center security desk for visitors or those who may have lost or forgotten their issued cloth face covering.

Instructions for donning and doffing personal protective equipment (PPE) can be found on the CDC website at: https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/ppe-sequence.pdf

III.   Workplace & Classroom Seating

Cornell Tech is keenly aware of the challenges presented by its open workspace seating design. We are working with our engineers and studying industry best practices to remedy this challenge, in accordance with local building and fire codes. Rest assured, workplace seating will be redesigned to accommodate social distancing requirements. Therefore, it may be necessary to relocate workstations and equipment.

Similarly, classrooms will be redesigned to accommodate social distancing requirements. Furniture will be relocated and or cordoned off to ensure student safety, while maximizing available space. Please adhere to the new classroom configurations.

IV.   Occupancy Limits

All academic and office spaces on campus are limited to 50% occupancy and will be reevaluated in accordance with NYC and NYS guidelines to ensure the institution is compliant with any revised occupancy limits as necessary. New occupancy limits or restrictions will be posted on the wall alongside the existing occupancy signage.

All huddle spaces will be designated for singular use, unless they are large enough to maintain six (6) feet of space between occupants. Meeting / conference room use must be scheduled and social distancing and face covering guidelines must be adhered to. Currently in NYS, no gathering shall exceed fifty (50) persons. This restriction will be revised as allowable by local government authorities.

V.   Partitions

Partitions and barriers will be deployed throughout the facilities and wherever feasible, to limit close contact as much as possible. Additionally, contactless processes will be implemented at the Café and security desk for customer checkout and visitor screening.

VI.   Elevator Use

Due to the size of the Bloomberg Center passenger elevators, elevator occupancy will be limited to two (2) persons at a time. Both elevator occupants must stand in diagonal corners of the elevator and wear a face covering. Although elevator buttons will be disinfected often, it is recommended that occupants utilize a glove, napkin, elbow, or another object to avoid unnecessary contact with surfaces. Please adhere to the Brookfield Properties posted occupancy limits for elevators inside the Tata Innovation Center and the Related Management signs posted for elevator usage inside The House.

VII.   Restroom Use

Cornell Tech will continue to allow community members to utilize restrooms in accordance with their gender identity expression. Single use restrooms will remain available for single use. The public restrooms by the Café will be limited to two persons at a time. The community or multi-stall restrooms in Bloomberg Center floors 1-4, will be restricted to three persons at a time to ensure adequate social distancing. If a restroom is fully occupied, please remain outside until a person exits the restroom.

VIII.   Cleaning & Disinfecting

Facilities Operations only uses EPA List N approved disinfectants found to be effective at killing the virus that causes COVID-19. In addition to standard daily cleaning procedures, elevated disinfection protocols have been established.

At a minimum, a full cleaning and disinfecting will be performed daily of all restrooms, classrooms, meeting rooms, conference rooms, workspaces, public areas, hallways, elevators, entryways, and foyers. High touch point areas such as light switches, door handles and push bars, elevator call buttons, and handrails will be sanitized twice per day.

In the event a community member tests positive for COVID-19, enhanced disinfecting protocols will be implemented as follows:

- The occupied area will be isolated and ventilated for a minimum of three (3) hours
- Facilities personnel equipped with appropriate PPE, consisting of N95 respirator, safety glasses, and nitrile gloves will clean and disinfect the area
- Particular attention will be given to hard surfaces and high touch point areas to include light switches, door handles, telephones, computer keyboards, mouse, and remote controls

If the space has not been occupied for seven (7) days or more, enhanced disinfection is not required, based on virus stability, and will not be performed. Cleaning logs will be maintained in the Facilities Operations area.

Hand sanitizer stations will be available at every building entrance, in elevator lobbies, in the Café, and outside restrooms. Hand sanitizer bottles will be placed in all meeting and conference rooms.

IX.   <u>Isolation Housing</u>

The NYCDOHMH recommends that COVID-19 positive patients under quarantine not share a bedroom or restroom with others. As a result, all residential students will only be assigned to single and double occupancy apartments with a minimum of two bedrooms and restrooms in each apartment. Additionally, Cornell Tech will maintain a percentage of single units at The House designated as isolation housing for our residential students. Should a student test positive for COVID-19, procedures have been established to help support the student through the quarantine period, while protecting the health and safety of The House residential staff and the other residents. Support will include the availability of various dining delivery options, trash removal, and procedure for safely exiting the building to attend required medical appointments.

Should COVID-19 patients exceed The House's isolation housing capacity, Cornell Tech will coordinate with NYCDOHMH to place our sick community members in local hotels which participate in NYC's COVID-19 hotel program.

CONCLUSION

Cornell Tech and society as a whole are operating under unprecedented times. COVID-19 has thrust institutions of higher education into unchartered waters and has challenged them to develop quality solutions for academic continuity.

Our faculty, staff, and students quickly and efficiently adopted to these new inconvenient but necessary academic and service delivery models. More impressively, they volunteered to help the most vulnerable in the local Roosevelt Island community, repurposed labs for PPE production in support of health care workers, and are pioneering many new and exciting COVID-19 related research initiatives. It is a testament to their fortitude to make the world a better and more equitable place for all.

A sense of community and belonging is central to the Cornell Tech experience. This campus reopening safety plan is the first step in restoring that experience. Although no plan is perfect and there will be many unforeseen challenges along the way, together we can do what we do best, come together as a community to help each other accomplish our common goals.