Dear graduate and professional students,

Last week, the campus’s Response and Recovery newsletter noted, “According to California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidelines, anyone working in higher education (meaning all UC Berkeley employees — faculty and staff alike), is working in the education sector (as defined by CDPH) and is therefore eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination.”

We understand that graduate and professional students have a complicated relationship to the categories of “staff,” and “faculty,” as well as now navigating new categories of “remote” and “in-person.” Whether you are working remotely, in-person, a Graduate Student Instructor, a Graduate Student Researcher, Reader, Tutor, Student Assistant, or any other form of campus employee, vaccine providers may consider you to be eligible as an employee under the CDPH guidelines to receive a vaccine. Each vaccinator is permitted to make its own eligibility determination based on its supply of vaccine and its interpretation of CDPH criteria, and we are providing the best guidance we can based on what we know at this moment.

Therefore, if you are a graduate student employed by the campus, we encourage you to contact your healthcare provider and/or visit the CDPH “My Turn” website to check your eligibility, receive a notification when vaccines and appointments are available in your area, or to book an appointment. Please be sure to review instructions from providers carefully; their criteria may be more restrictive than the state’s, and may change daily depending on vaccine allocation and changing state guidelines.

The vaccine is being purchased by the federal government and will be provided to individuals at no cost. Based on what we know at the moment, if you have insurance, you may be asked to provide it when booking an appointment, but insurance is not required, and you will not need to pay for the vaccine. We do not yet know what proof of employment may be required of students employed by the university, though we believe it may be helpful to bring identification cards (state and university) and a university pay stub.

The campus hopes it will begin to receive doses to vaccinate Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) members sometime in mid-to-late March. UHS is required to initially prioritize vaccinations for students with disabilities or specific significant underlying health conditions, according to state guidelines. If you are not insured through SHIP, we recommend reaching out to your healthcare provider directly. If you are temporarily uninsured, please contact SHIP. In the meantime, we recommend that...
if you can get vaccinated through an external vaccination site, please do so.

While we know that you and other members of the broader campus community are seeking clear-cut answers to many vaccine-related questions based on the CDPH's new guidance, there is still a great deal of uncertainty outside of the university’s control regarding the different processes or requirements at different localities and vaccination sites — and not all sites have begun vaccinating those in the education sector. Thank you for your patience as we continue to interpret state guidelines as they are released.

As we have highlighted throughout the past year, our campus is committed to following public health guidance and laying the foundation for in-person instruction in a way that is safe and meets the needs of the campus community. We believe the vaccination of as much of our campus community as possible is a critical step towards this goal.

We are providing you with all the information we have at the moment in an effort to be as responsive as possible to changing guidelines. As always, please review the information on UHS’s vaccine webpage, updated weekly, to stay informed regarding vaccine availability through UHS and watch for updates in the Recovery and Response newsletter each Friday.

If you have additional questions, you may submit them through the "Contact us" form on the campus coronavirus website.

Sincerely,

Lisa García Bedolla
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Luis Tenorio
President, Graduate Assembly