



## The University of Texas at Austin College of Natural Sciences

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Dear CNS Community,

As students, faculty and staff in Natural Sciences, many of you have been at the forefront of addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to start by thanking all of you who have been helping, in ways big and small, whether that's meant getting your own vaccine, delivering public health messages, making research discoveries or contributing to plans and preparations for returning safely for a new academic year. As devastating as this pandemic has been, it has shown the immense things our Texas Science community is able to do together.

With cases of the coronavirus rising due to the Delta variant, I know you'd like to hear more about how this affects plans for the semester. The university and college leadership are continuing to work on this, and while I don't have all of the answers today, I want to write now and ask for your continued partnership this year. I hope you will join me in approaching the year with two commitments: **caring for one another, and paying attention to science.**

A great deal of research from medical doctors and scientists shows learning and being together in person can happen safely when there's robust testing, vaccinations and contact tracing, where spaces are well ventilated and where communities know to stay home when they're sick. Our individual actions matter, too. Each of us makes contributions to our culture of care and safety, with choices that have the power to make each of us safe and a lasting difference for the people around us.

Vaccination is one important choice. Years of scientific research, **including in this college**, helped bring about safe, effective COVID-19 vaccines, that are now freely available. I strongly encourage you, if you haven't already, to get vaccinated. The vaccines **provide strong protection** against infection and make you much, much safer from serious illness, hospitalization or death. The best way to protect you—and others, including children and people who are immunocompromised—is getting vaccinated. The science points to choosing other strategies, too, like getting regular **proactive community testing** and following the **CDC's latest guidelines** about wearing a face mask indoors, even if you're vaccinated.

Our commitments to one another and to science are central in CNS, and I appreciate your willingness to continue to lead in combatting the virus together this fall. I look forward to a new academic year together this fall.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David".

David Vanden Bout | Interim Dean

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This communication is from College of Natural Sciences – Official.

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