Dear President’s Council and Senior Planning Group Members,

Holiday traditions are upon us and present unique challenges as we look to gather and celebrate while the risk of COVID-19 transmission continues to be present in our daily lives. While our campus vaccination rate is high and our community positivity rate is low, there continues to be substantial community transmission in our surrounding communities. This uptick in COVID-19 cases around the city, region, nation and world is a reminder that as a society we are still coexisting with a serious virus requiring our diligence in our daily live, and presenting us a unique challenge. As such, we offer the following guidance and options for safer ways to celebrate the holidays.

The safest option we recommend is postponing any December gatherings until January, perhaps as a "Happy 2022" celebration. If you do plan to host a holiday gathering, the safest locations to celebrate remain outdoors. Since this may be impractical, indoor gatherings can be held on campus in large spaces with optimal air flow. This year, attendance should be limited to employees (no spouses or guests) all attendees should be fully vaccinated, all attendees are expected to have a green PennOpen Pass. We also recommend that there be no eating or drinking. If food is offered, it should be done so with catering staff in order to minimize any transmission risk. Alternatively, there could be boxed foods/lunches/desserts/goodie bags and canned/bottled beverages for grab-and-go at the end of the event. Indoor events must be able to accommodate physical distancing while eating and drinking, and masks should be worn when not eating or drinking. Lastly, we recommend gatherings of a small number of invitees; for example the gathering could be that of an office or department, as opposed to that of a whole division.

As a general rule, the following public health guidance remains critical:

- Protect those not yet eligible for vaccination such as young children by getting yourself and other eligible people around them vaccinated.
- Prioritize outdoor meals over indoor
- Pre-packaged or boxed meals should be prioritized over buffet
- Hand sanitizer should be made widely available
- Masks are required indoors in public and shared spaces for ALL, including those who are fully vaccinated.
- If you are sick or have symptoms, don’t host or attend a gathering.

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