

## Creating #COVIDSafeZones for Collegiate Athletics

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More than 890 colleges and universities have joined the President's COVID-19 College Vaccine Challenge since it was announced in June 2021. As we move towards schools opening nationwide in a few weeks, it is imperative that we continue to increase our vaccination rate in younger demographics and incentivize vaccination at colleges and universities.

COVID Collaborative is a national assembly of experts, leaders and institutions in health, education and the economy and associations representing the diversity of the country to turn the tide on the pandemic by supporting federal, state and local COVID-19 response efforts. COVID Collaborative has created "COVIDSafeZones" with leaders in the business sector and higher education. The COVID Collaborative and Autonomy 5 conferences believe strongly that vaccination is an important method to slow the spread of COVID in the United States and protect our students and the community, from the effects of COVID and Post Acute Symptomatic COVID (PASC), which is increasingly being recognized among our youth.

Many schools have encouraged vaccination among student athletes and presently across the Autonomy 5 conferences over 85% of student-athletes and staff are vaccinated. This is a substantially higher percentage than the broader population of 18-22 year olds and represents a significant accomplishment for these colleges and universities. Student-athletes are providing the template for other students and the young people at these institutions should be recognized for raising the bar across the country and promoting public health. Indeed, more than 30 schools have greater than 90% of their student-athletes vaccinated, and many are nearing 100%, including some of the premier football programs in the country.

The COVID Collaborative and Autonomy 5 conferences continue to encourage students to vaccinate prior to attending games this fall and make these the safest possible events for their communities. Thus, COVID Collaborative has provided resources for schools wishing to plan vaccination events this fall, and with Week 1 of the season approaching, institutions in each conference will be supporting vaccination events. By vaccinating the broader student body and communities across the country associated with these large events, the safety of games this fall may improve, and allow us to continue to move forward as a society.

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