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## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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December 29, 2021

Dear UNE Community,

I am writing with an update on the University's COVID-19 health and safety protocols. The Omicron variant is proving to be much more contagious than prior variants and continues to spread across Maine and the country. Thankfully, the data so far reveal that this variant also causes less severe symptoms, especially in people who are fully vaccinated and have had a booster. In fact, many cases of Omicron infection are completely asymptomatic. In accordance with the latest CDC guidance and recommendations from our own medical experts, we will put the following protocols in place for the beginning of the spring semester.

### **ISOLATION**

We will continue to follow CDC guidelines for isolation, which were recently updated. Going forward, people who test positive will isolate for five days if asymptomatic. According to the CDC, this change was motivated by science demonstrating that transmission occurs early following infection. If you have been exposed and you are fully vaccinated, including receiving a booster dose, but you have not tested positive, the CDC does not require isolation, but advises you to wear a mask for 10 days when around others.

### **VACCINE BOOSTERS**

The deadline for obtaining and uploading your booster vaccine dose will be February 16 unless you are not yet eligible because you received your vaccination after the August 16, 2021 deadline. We strongly urge you to get your booster as soon as you are eligible and not to wait until the deadline. Because the CDC has issued new guidance that requires the booster dose to be considered fully vaccinated, those who aren't boosted will be subject to stricter quarantine protocols if they are exposed. We plan to run booster clinics on both campuses in January. Please continue to monitor email for more information.

### **MASKING**

For all on campus students, faculty, and professional staff, during your first week of returning to campus, you will be required to double-mask indoors. This means wearing two surgical masks, a surgical mask with a cloth mask over it, or one KN95 or N95 mask,\* which does not need an additional layer. Masks will not be required outdoors.

This week of double-masking will happen at different times depending on when your academic program starts or which unit you work in. The hope is to resume using a single mask after that first week, but the plan is subject to change, so please monitor email for updates.

*\* On Jan. 6, 2022, UNE added the KF94 mask to the list of masks that do not require doubling. Acceptable alternatives to double masking now include one KN95, N95, or KF94 mask.*

## **ADDITIONAL SAFETY MEASURES**

While academic activities will remain in person so that we can continue to provide students with a full educational experience, we do encourage other work meetings to happen via Zoom, when possible, for the beginning of the spring semester.

It has become increasingly clear that we as a society have entered a new phase of this pandemic in which we simply will not be able to avoid transmission of the virus entirely on our campuses, as we have strived to do up to this point. However, we will rely on the above mitigation measures to slow its spread, with full vaccination (including the booster dose) being the cornerstone of our strategy.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely and will revise our protocols accordingly. Please continue to monitor the [UNE Onward website](#) as well as your email for further updates from me, our medical team, and/or your unit manager. Thank you for your continued cooperation with our evolving health and safety protocols as we continue to navigate this challenging situation together.

Sincerely,

James D. Herbert  
*President*