



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

August 16, 2021

Dear UNE Community,

As our full community of students, faculty, and professional staff return to our campuses for the new academic year, I want to provide an update about the status of UNE's public health and safety measures with respect to COVID-19.

Let me begin by restating that the highest priority of UNE's evolving plan is maintaining the health and safety of the University's students, faculty, and professional staff. This is precisely why we made the decision several weeks ago to mandate vaccinations as we head into the fall semester. To that end, I am pleased to report that compliance with our vaccine mandate for students, faculty, and professional staff is nearing 100%. The vast majority of students have already submitted their vaccination information, and a small number have requested an exemption. Should any student arrive on campus without having complied with the mandate they will be taken through the steps to comply with the policy immediately in order to stay on campus.

UNE's COVID-19 Response Committee continues to meet weekly and have daily conversations about the current public health situation, and specifically how the Delta variant could impact our operations. As we have since the start of the pandemic, we use several resources to inform decision-making, including but not limited to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Maine CDC, the World Health Organization, the State of Maine Office of the Governor, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), the evolving science on COVID-19, and best practices in higher education. We continue to be in close contact with the Maine CDC as well as other colleges and universities in the state and region. Our policies are consistent with most other regional colleges and universities, and the Maine CDC has indicated that our vaccine mandate is the best step we can take in making our campuses safe for our community.

We know the Maine CDC is recommending masks for indoor public spaces for those counties with at least a substantial rate of transmission, which currently includes York and Cumberland Counties. However, the extremely high vaccination rate at UNE makes our campuses one of the safest places in the country we can be, and it is the reason we will continue with our current policy of only requiring masks for unvaccinated

people within the UNE community. That said, effective immediately, UNE will require visitors to our campuses to wear a mask indoors regardless of vaccination status. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and may need to implement an indoor mask mandate for the UNE community in the future if developments warrant.

I want to be clear that UNE's policy does not discourage masks in any setting. Masking continues to be welcome for those who wish to have an extra layer of protection to keep themselves and those around them safe, and discouraging masks will not be tolerated.

I am looking forward to a safe and exciting semester, and I look forward to seeing you all back on our campuses.

Sincerely,

James D. Herbert
President