



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

560 N. Park, 4th Floor – PO Box 203201 – Helena, Montana 59620-3201
(406) 449-9124 - FAX (406) 449-9171

To: Montana Board of Regents; Montana University System Chief Executive Officers;
Montana Community College Presidents

From: Clayton T. Christian, Commissioner of Higher Education

Date: May 14, 2021

Subject: **COVID-19 UPDATE: Effective Immediately - Sunsetting the Healthy MUS Planning Guidelines**

While this past year has been a challenge for the Montana University System (MUS) in many ways, it has been a success in many more. A key driver of our success has been the ability to respond, plan, and act in a coordinated manner. Nothing embodies our coordination better than the Healthy MUS Task Force and the COVID-19 Planning Guidelines its members developed and updated over the past 12 months. There is no doubt that the Healthy MUS Guidelines gave the entire MUS a clear roadmap for success this past Academic Year.

Fortunately, our public health situation is improving in Montana. And while we will continue to adapt and adjust as conditions warrant, **I am writing today to formally sunset the Healthy MUS Planning Guidelines. This change is effective immediately.** This action is taken in partnership with the Montana Board of Regents and is based on federal, state, and local public health guidance and on the recommendation of the Healthy MUS Task Force. In place of the Healthy MUS Planning Guidelines, please find below areas of remaining system-level guidance that are in effect until further notice:

Mask Requirement. There is no longer a system-level mask requirement for the Montana University System. Campuses should consult relevant authorities and guidance at the local, state, and federal levels when developing any ongoing guidance related to masks.

COVID-19 Testing. Campuses will, on their own or with state and local health care providers, ensure that symptomatic individuals have continued access to COVID-19 testing. Campuses will support local public health authorities if and when contact tracing is necessary.

Quarantine & Isolation Housing. If and when necessary, campuses will make accommodations available for students living on campus who require isolation or quarantine housing due to COVID-19 exposure.

International Travel. When considering approval of MUS-affiliated travel, campuses will rely upon travel guidance from federal public health agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). International travel to CDC “Level 4” countries remains prohibited. Travel to CDC “Level 3” countries is strongly discouraged and may only be approved through petition and after approval by a campus travel review committee and cabinet level leadership. At a minimum, the travel review process needs to include requirements for enhanced pre-departure health and safety training, risk management planning, and contingency planning in case changing conditions require trip cancellation, or significant modification. Individuals returning to, or visiting, MUS campuses from international destinations should follow relevant CDC guidance related to COVID-19 testing after travel and self-monitoring for symptoms.

Event hosting. Campuses will consult and coordinate with local public health authorities when planning and hosting large events.

Vaccines. Campuses will continue to raise awareness about the importance of our COVID-19 vaccination effort and promote access to COVID-19 vaccines, including the use of incentive programs and/or vaccination events when practical.

In the coming weeks and months, my office will continue to act in partnership with the Board of Regents and consult with the Healthy MUS Task Force, statewide leaders, and with local, state, and federal public health guidance as we consider any changes to the system-level guidance above. We remain vigilant and flexible, even as we celebrate this significant step toward a full return to normal operations across the MUS.

As we turn toward the summer season, I would like to once again express my gratitude for your leadership and service, and congratulate you and your entire campus community on the successful completion of an Academic Year unlike any other in the history of the Montana University System.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clayton T. Christian', written in a cursive style.

Clayton T. Christian
Commissioner of Higher Education