

Healthy MUS Planning Guidelines for Campuses

Updated January 2021

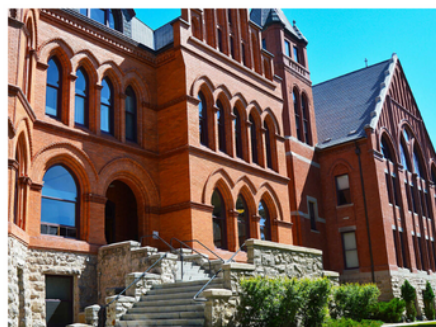


Table of Contents

Introduction...	[3]
Integrated Guidelines...	[4-5]
Planning Areas...	[6-16]
Deliver Quality Instruction...	[6]
Conduct Research and Creative Scholarship...	[7]
Provide Student Housing...	[8]
Provide Food Services...	[9]
Events and Welcoming Students/Visitors to Campuses...	[10]
Athletics...	[11]
Provide Student Support Services...	[12]
Staff Campus Operations...	[13]
Maintain Buildings and Facilities...	[14]
Provide Campus Transportation...	[15]
Campus Safety and Security...	[16]
Task Force Members and Staff...	[17]
Appendix A: State and National Resources...	[18-20]
Appendix B: Face Covering Requirement...	[21-23]
Appendix C: January 6, 2021 Memo from Commissioner Christian re. Spring Semester 2021 Guidelines for Targeted Return Testing...	[24-25]

Introduction

January 2021

The Healthy Montana University System (MUS) Task Force has updated planning guidelines for MUS campuses as they continue to deliver largely in-person instruction and on-campus student life during the Spring 2021 semester. As they have since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) and the Healthy MUS Task Force will continue implementing and establish new protocols and approaches based on assessments of the evolving threat posed by COVID-19 and extensive communication and collaboration with local, state, and federal public health officials. Vaccination timetables and progress will also play an important role in shaping the MUS approach for the spring, summer, and beyond. Because the public health environment will remain volatile for the foreseeable future, we encourage campuses to continue developing contingency plans in all areas that are adaptable to decreased or increased public health environments.

It is imperative that campuses continue to implement plans in close alignment with one another under the broad authority and responsibility of the Board of Regents (BOR) to supervise and manage the MUS, and with a charge from the BOR to prioritize health and safety measures, while continuing to effectively serve their students, their communities, and the State of Montana. This approach served us well during the Fall 2020 semester and we will continue to follow it moving forward.

Of course our campuses each operate in a unique environment, and it is important to remind campuses that the updated planning guidelines presented here are not meant to serve as an operational plan in themselves; campuses should instead use these guidelines as a framework within which they can continue to implement their own more detailed and tailored plans. As such, the guidelines can be thought of as a mid-altitude planning and implementation checklist – granular enough to provide useful direction, but not meant to replace the kind of context-sensitive planning that can only emerge at the campus level. As campuses update and continue to implement their specific operational plans, we encourage an inclusive process that reflects input from administration, employees, students, local public health officials, and other community partners.

The guidelines included represent updates to the Task Force’s original planning guidelines. As such and even though campuses are already well underway with implementing and operationalizing plans, the language of planning is maintained as campuses will continue to need to adjust plans and operations in response to a dynamic and ever-evolving situation.

The guidelines remain separated into two categories: Integrated Guidelines and Planning Areas. Integrated Guidelines represent protocols, approaches, and considerations that MUS campuses should account for as they develop strategies in any Planning Area. Planning Areas represent the different operational imperatives across the MUS; they account for the things that our institutions do. Each Planning Area identifies essential items that campuses must address as they build and update their campus plan. It is important to note that some Planning Areas do not apply to certain campuses. For example, some of our two-year campuses do not provide housing in the manner represented in this document. Each Planning Area also includes planning considerations, or those items that campuses are encouraged, though not required, to address in their response plans and operations.

Integrated Guidelines

Health and Safety Protocols: Campuses will promote safety, cleaning, and social distancing policies as defined by local, state, and federal public health authorities. Campuses will require the use of face coverings and social distancing in indoor spaces except for individual occupancy in a room or office. Campuses will develop specific mask policies for Residence Life, campus dining facilities and fitness centers. In planning and in communication with returning students and employees, campuses need to explicitly acknowledge that there are some increased risks associated with a return to living, learning, and working on campus. Reasonable accommodations will be made for students, employees, or campus visitors who are at an increased risk. Faculty and academic staff should also provide reasonable and practical support to students who cannot attend in-person classes because they are in quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19 exposure. Campuses will coordinate with OCHE to establish any needed guidelines for use of personal safety supplies, cleaning supplies, and health monitoring equipment.

Public Health Testing, Tracing, and Mitigation Protocols: Campuses will coordinate closely with OCHE to develop a monitoring, testing, tracing, and quarantine & isolation strategy that is sustainable, consistent across the MUS, and integrated with the broader strategies endorsed by the state of Montana and local public health authorities. For the Spring 2021 Semester, campuses will develop and implement return testing strategies consistent with Commissioner Christian's Jan. 6, 2021 memo "Guidelines for Targeted Return Testing: Spring 2021" (https://mus.edu/coronavirus/memo_01-06-2021.html). Campuses will also continue to focus on rapid testing and diagnosis of symptomatic individuals, isolation of positive COVID-19 cases, and rapid contact tracing as well as testing and/or quarantine of close contacts to those cases. OCHE will continue to work with statewide officials and public health authorities to secure testing and other material resources necessary to conduct targeted testing of asymptomatic individuals, especially during the January return to classes. In coordination with OCHE and local public health officials, campuses will continue to make any necessary adjustments to testing, tracing, and mitigation strategies that reduce health risks to students and employees. As was the case in Fall 2020, OCHE and campus leaders will rely upon a multitude of factors, trends, capacity measures, and guidance rather than any single set of criteria or thresholds when assessing the possibility of transition to remote delivery and/or campus closure.

Vaccination Protocols: While each campus is different and some vaccination timetables and protocols will depend on decisions made at the state and local level, campuses should coordinate with OCHE so that vaccinations are delivered across the MUS in a way that is as consistent and effective as possible. Throughout the spring, campuses will collaborate, share information, and review their plans as appropriate with OCHE and local public health officials. As is the case with testing, tracing, and mitigation, campuses should coordinate with OCHE and local public health officials to make any necessary adjustments to vaccination strategies that reduce health risks to students and employees.

Budgetary Considerations: While additional investment may be required in certain areas, all planning should be mindful of our budgetary constraints. Campuses should work closely with OCHE in order to ensure that resources secured through federal and/or state COVID-19 relief efforts are spent and accounted for according to established requirements.

Integrated Guidelines

Leveraging Technology: In-person instruction, student life, and campus operations may be enhanced by use of technology to mitigate health and contagion risks while meeting institutional goals for on-campus living and learning. When possible and advantageous, campuses should work with OCHE to pursue shared procurement of new technologies and services.

Communication: Campuses will continue developing and implementing communications plans that effectively and quickly share new policies, schedules, health and safety standards, and other information with students, employees, and communities. The OCHE Communications Director and campus communities, including students and their families, should be informed of significant changes before they are announced to the broader public.

Travel: In all operational areas, policies for all university-sponsored or affiliated travel (essential, non-essential, international, out-of-state, in-state, student, employee, student group, athletic, etc.) will be developed in coordination with OCHE in accordance with state and federal (CDC, US Department of State, etc.) or affiliated organization (NCAA, NAIA, etc.) guidelines.

Accessibility & Privacy: Alterations to existing instruction, campus life, and operations should continue to comply with state and federal accessibility guidelines (IDEA, ADA, etc.) and should continue to adhere to federal privacy requirements (HIPAA, FERPA, etc.).

Deliver Quality Instruction

Essential Items:

- Each campus will provide largely in-person instruction for the Spring 2021 semester. Campuses should work with faculty to ensure that instructional delivery modes are clearly outlined and explained at the outset of the semester, and that any plans to alter the planned mode of instructional delivery are first cleared with departmental, college, and campus leadership and then clearly communicated to students.
- Coordinate with OCHE Human Resources leadership on the process for establishing the rationale for, and documenting, any accommodations made for faculty or other instructors to teach remotely.
- Establish a classroom occupancy, traffic flow, and course scheduling plan that minimizes health risks associated with in-person instruction.
- Where possible, work with faculty to develop flexible instructional plans that leverage instructional technology, encourage in-person and blended delivery, and utilize classrooms that are large enough to maintain social distancing between students.
- Work with faculty to develop a plan for quickly transitioning to and from remote delivery during the Spring 2021 semester should conditions warrant.
- Provide training and resources to help faculty maximize use of learning technologies and blended course delivery.
- Establish tools and practices to assess student learning in online, blended, or other delivery formats.
- To the greatest extent possible, develop a technological infrastructure (e.g. course scheduling, LMS shells, etc.) that can transition between remote and in-person delivery.
- Account for impacts on federal and state compliance requirements (accessibility, financial aid, Veteran's services, etc.) resulting from alterations to instruction models and/or physical learning spaces and identify how compliance requirements in each area will be met.
- Make decisions about experiential learning (e.g. internships, clinical work, student teaching in K-12 settings, education abroad, etc.) based on an assessment of health risks at destination / learning site, compatible approaches by external partners, size of learning group, equipment needs, health risks associated with required transportation, and the extent to which the experience is essential (for accreditation etc.) to the program of study.
- Faculty and academic staff should also provide reasonable and practical support to students who cannot attend in-person classes because they are in quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19 exposure.
- Establish targeted mental health and wellness plans for students, faculty and instructional staff who may need and seek additional support in adjusting to the stresses brought on or exacerbated by COVID-19.

Planning Considerations:

- Promote faculty engagement in training/professional development activities (note: consult with relevant campus HR and faculty associations, collective bargaining agreements, and OCHE HR regarding faculty work during "off contract" periods).
- Consider strategies that addresses student equity gaps that may be exacerbated by increased reliance on remote or technology-enable delivery modes.
- Consider greater tracking of classroom attendance and/or promoting consistent seating arrangements for in-person classes to assist public health authorities in contact tracing in the event of exposure.
- Consider any community health risks and community engagement benefits of delivering in-person Lifelong Learning, Extension, and Community Outreach programming.
- Consider establishing updated classroom capacities that take into account social distancing guidelines.

Conduct Research & Creative Scholarship

Essential Items:

- Establish clear protocols for moving between Research Operation Levels 0-4.
- Develop standard operating procedures and protocols for cleaning, social distancing, and traffic flow in lab/workspaces. Particular attention should be given to cleaning and usage of shared lab/workspace equipment.
- Design meetings with off-campus research collaborators and sponsors to minimize health and transmission risks.
- Establish policies for university-affiliated research travel that align with general campus policies for university-affiliated travel.

Planning Considerations:

- Consider working with principal investigators and funding agencies to amend allowable grant expenditures to include additional health and safety measures that will mitigate risks associated with conducting research and creative scholarship.
- Consider if, and how, campus evaluation of research and creative scholarship (e.g. for promotion, tenure, merit, relevant awards) might be adjusted in light of COVID-19 disruption.
- Consider reducing the number of students in physical science labs by using flexible delivery methods and small groupings of students.
- Consider working with principal investigators and funding agencies to re-budget and, when applicable, revise grants' proposed outcomes to accommodate COVID-related restrictions and delays.
- Consider allowing extensions for internal grants; work with faculty to re-budget their internal grants to accommodate COVID-related restrictions (i.e., inability to travel, attend conferences, work face to face with external partners/students, etc.).
- Consider revising IRB application requirements to require protocols that reduce the risk of COVID spread during research with human subjects.

Provide Student Housing

Essential Items:

- Develop an occupancy plan for residence halls to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This plan should be completed in coordination with university emergency management, university health professionals, and county public health officials.
- Follow campus cleaning procedures for all common areas (e.g. shared restrooms, study areas, laundry rooms, vending machines, etc.), with special attention to high touch surfaces.
- Conduct training on public health measures and signs/symptoms of COVID-19 for all live-in professionals, graduate hall directors, residence advisors, and others in similar roles at the beginning of the spring semester.
- Limit residence hall access and visitors.
- Develop a plan, including but not limited to signage and traffic flow markings, to promote social distancing in high occupancy or confined areas within residence halls (e.g. elevators, stairs, and entrances).
- Reconfigure seating in common areas to ensure proper social distancing.
- Build a “welcome back to campus” plan that establishes staggered move-in dates/times, promotes social distancing, and accommodates smaller group orientation sessions.
- Develop a plan to address any relevant quarantine or health-related requirements for students returning to residence halls. This plan should align with statewide requirements and be completed in coordination with OCHE, university emergency management, university health professionals, and county public health officials.
- Develop a plan for the quarantine and isolation of campus residents awaiting COVID-19 test results, after testing positive for COVID-19, or when directed to quarantine by public health officials. Whether on campus or off campus, isolation strategies should reflect advice and consultation from County Health Department plans. Campus isolation plans may include some or all the following elements:
 - Be physically separated from other residential student rooms.
 - Have private bathroom facilities and be stocked with a thermometer, sanitizing wipes, tissues, soap, hand sanitizer, and toiletries.
 - Where possible, make accessible additional equipment for monitoring vital signs (e.g. pulse oximeters).
 - Be pre-identified and available to accommodate an increase in need.
 - Be accessible for food delivery from campus food service or other arranged delivery.
 - Have connectivity that allows students to continue academic study through remote access whenever possible.

Planning Considerations:

- Consider alternate living arrangements for students who self-identify as having significant health issues and/or as immuno-compromised.
- Consider adjusting desk operations in residence halls to reduce contact/touch, such as package delivery, mail distribution, etc.
- Consider a training program for residential staff that focuses on how to manage conflicts between students over adherence to COVID-19 protocols and what to do if someone tests positive for COVID-19.

Provide Food Services

Essential Items:

- Establish hours of operation that allow for facility occupancy that meets social distancing guidelines and allows proper cleaning and sanitation. Specific approaches should draw from established CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community>) and ACHA (<https://www.acha.org/COVID-19>) guidelines.
- Require all dining facility staff to wear face masks and gloves while working and interacting with the public.
- Plan to limit the number of individuals dining in a single facility at one time.
- Dining hall capacity should achieve appropriate physical distancing of diners, and, once the target capacity is reached, an additional individual should only be allowed entry when another leaves.
- Eliminate buffet-style, self-serve food and beverage stations and replace with staff-served meal stations.
- Develop traffic flow patterns and seating arrangements for each venue that allow for social distancing and discourage unnecessary congregating. Physically spaced (6-foot) floor markers should be used for waiting lines outside and inside the facility. Inside the facility there should be an appropriately limited number of tables and chairs per table.
- Promote more pre-order, curbside pick-up, delivery, and “grab-and-go” food service options.
- Arrange for food delivery to students in isolation or quarantine.

Planning Considerations:

- Consider establishing staggered mealtimes for sit-down venues with specified times for students (residential and non-residential), employees, and visitors.
- Consider establishing additional food service facilities (including food trucks) on campus to allow for greater social distancing and less congregation.

Events and Welcoming Students/Visitors to Campus

Essential Items:

- Generally, events and social gatherings should be discouraged. Social gatherings and extra-curricular events that do occur should be held outside if possible and kept to limited size. If event size or other considerations dictate, events and gatherings will be planned in collaboration with state and/or county public health officials.
- For all event venues, develop occupancy limits and seating charts that follow local and state guidelines on event size and that allow for social distancing at all events.
- For all event venues, establish rules for traffic flow and congregational spaces (e.g. bathrooms, concession areas) that minimize risk of disease transmission while still meeting accessibility requirements.
- For all venues and for each event, establish a pre-event, intra-event, and post-event cleaning plan based on public health and CDC guidelines. Ensure that event scheduling allows for appropriate cleaning to take place between the conclusion of one event and the beginning of another.
- For all major, high-occupancy events (e.g. Commencement, Homecoming), develop a plan that considers:
 - Moving events to the Academic Year 2021-2022 when possible.
 - Breaking up singular event instances into multiple, smaller instances of that event.
 - Avoiding overlapping events that place stress on campus staffing, cleaning resources, and ability to maintain social distancing.
- For “welcome to campus” events (e.g. orientation, move-in day), develop a plan that considers:
 - Staggering arrival/move-in days and times to allow for smaller groups and lighter traffic flow.
 - A strategy coordinated with state and local public health authorities for testing students who are returning to campus from time recently spent out-of-state due to travel or residency.
 - Breaking up larger orientation events into multiple smaller events.
 - Allowing students to complete some items on their “welcome to campus” checklist virtually in order to reduce crowding on campus.
 - Accounting for any relevant quarantine and health check requirements when welcoming students and/or visitors to campus from outside Montana.
- Establish decision criteria for hosting (or not hosting) non-college/university events.
- Require all off-campus organizations scheduling non-college/university events on campus to agree to updated terms and conditions requiring campus sanitation protocols.
- Design in-person campus tours to include smaller groups that meet social distancing guidelines and restrictions on size of gathering.

Planning Considerations:

- Consider greater use of online/virtual events, including instances when events are livestreamed to off-site audiences rather than hosted in front of an on-site audience.
- Consider limiting the number of non-college/university events hosted on campus.
- Consider contractual restrictions when planning for live streaming and/or online delivery of events.
- Consider ticketing policies that require advance purchase and registration to better adhere to event capacity limits and to support public health efforts at contact tracing in event of exposure.
- Consider – in conjunction with campus health, campus risk management, and local health officials – the risk-reward balance in hosting events that will bring high numbers of attendees from out of state or from known high-risk areas.
- Consider using outdoor venues if they allow for better spacing and air flow.
- Consider additional training and support for event staff to prepare them for health, safety, and audience management strategies.
- Consider additional costs associated with sanitation requirements when contracting events for non-college/university entities.
- Consider on-site messaging about health and safety at all events.
- For events hosted by student organizations, consider a greater advisory and monitoring role for faculty/staff advisors.

Athletics

Note: Guidance for this section continues to be general in nature. As it was in the fall, Athletics planning will be strongly influenced by current and upcoming guidance established by relevant athletics conferences (e.g. Big Sky Conference, Frontier Conference) and national organizing bodies (e.g. NCAA, NAIA).

Essential Items:

- Conduct an assessment of the potential for COVID-19 transmission in each sport (e.g. individual vs. team sports, contact vs. non-contact sports, major spectator vs. limited spectator sports). Risk factors should be established and return to practice and competition should be based on factors including, but not necessarily limited to, any impediments to social distancing (e.g. contact between players), ball transfer, cleaning of shared equipment, and feasibility of social distancing among any spectators.
- Develop a health assessment survey for student athletes at onset of the practice and competitive season; and develop an ongoing health screening process to monitor health of student athletes at regular intervals throughout the practice and competitive season.
- Promote social distancing and enhanced cleaning in areas of congregation including training rooms, locker rooms, strength and conditioning facilities, and other team meeting areas.
- Athletics administration and sports medicine staff should follow federal, state, local, and institutional public health recommendations related to screening and testing of student-athletes and staff following team, work-related, and personal travel.

Planning Considerations:

- Consider, with guidance from state and local public health authorities, the challenges and opportunities associated with a consistent COVID-19 testing and monitoring plan for student-athletes preparing for and, competing in, inter-collegiate sports.
- If not done already, consider creation of a COVID-19 Athletics Coordination Team, which could include the athletic director or designee, head athletic trainer or designee, head team physician or designee, coaching representative, strength and conditioning representative, student health services representative, counseling services representative, a student-athlete, and a representative from the local health care system (campus medical center or local health care system).
- Continue to consider whether travel for competition is appropriate given the current stage of the pandemic (especially at the competition location), potential isolation and quarantine measures that could arise as a result of the travel, and additional screening that may be required as a result of the travel.

Provide Student Support Services

Essential Items:

- Where possible, plan to supplement delivery of in-person support services and student conduct management with alternate delivery strategies.
- Train student support staff to effectively use alternate delivery methods.
- Design staffing, facilities, scheduling, and traffic flow to mitigate health risks for students and employees during in-person delivery.
- Develop a communication strategy to inform students and the campus community about various delivery modes (e.g. in-person, online, or both), specific precautionary measures/risks, and contingency plans for remote or altered delivery for each area of student support.
- Consider revamped and expanded mental health outreach and treatment strategies, including online appointments.
- Faculty and academic staff should also provide reasonable and practical support to students who cannot attend in-person or online classes because they are in quarantine or isolation, or are too ill due to COVID-19 exposure.
- Expand mental health support and wellness plans for students who may need and seek additional support in adjusting to the stresses exacerbated by COVID-19.
- Special attention should be given to expanding remote access to mental health and wellness supports.

Planning Considerations:

- Consider education and support for students that helps them easily access and effectively use online student support services.
- Consider developing tools to assess the effectiveness of student support services being offered through different delivery methods.
- Consider expanding range of virtual events and programming to focus on student social engagement.

Staff Campus Operations

Essential Items:

- Design staffing and facility use plans to mitigate health risks for employees and students. These plans may include:
 - Redesigned physical spaces, designated traffic flow patterns, and use of physical barriers such as plexiglass where feasible.
 - Adjusted staffing schedules and operational hours that allow for staggered work shifts, rotating teams in each operational area, and more social distancing for staff and students.
- Plan a strategy for reasonable work accommodations for employees with heightened risk from COVID-19 exposure.
- Where relevant, consult with employee unions as staffing strategies are developed.
- Ensure that employee work schedules comply with contractual obligations.
- For student-facing business operations (e.g. financial aid, business services, etc.) supplement in-person service with remote delivery options whenever possible, with an emphasis on phone/tablet accessibility.

Planning Considerations:

- In consultation with OCHE, consider using shared services procurement with other MUS campuses when the need for new business operations technologies and services arises.
- Consider updating office/department websites to make it easier for current and prospective students to understand necessary documentation and processes.

Maintain Buildings and Facilities

Essential Items:

- Develop a building/facilities usage and staffing plan that ensures adequate cleaning and sanitation, with particular attention to all high traffic areas, common areas, and restroom facilities, and develop tracking process for cleanings.
- Develop a plan for placement and monitoring of materials that promote healthy hygiene practices (refilling of sanitizers, etc.).
- Establish, as applicable, clearly communicated guidelines if there are any changes to building hours of operation or general accessibility.
- Develop a plan for visible signage that promotes social distancing and healthy hygiene practices, and clearly indicates desired traffic flow.
- Develop a communication plan that allows for timely reaction to specific cleaning needs and any needed changes to scheduling/rescheduling of space after a positive case is discovered.

Planning Considerations:

- Consider developing guidance for classroom instructors and students to promote best practices for sanitizing classroom spaces in between classes (e.g. wiping down desks/workspaces with available wipes).
- Consider enhanced swipe/access technology to improve control over building traffic, to monitor access to buildings, and to assist with contact tracing if needed.
- Consider alternative egress/ingress patterns to minimize congregation in high traffic areas.

Provide Campus Transportation

Essential Items:

- In accordance with CDC and applicable local and state public healthy guidelines, develop and execute adequate cleaning protocols for campus vehicles and transportation hubs (e.g. campus bus stops) during prime usage hours and in between prime usage hours.
- Strongly encourage use of face coverings for employees and passengers using campus transportation and make hand sanitizer available to those entering and exiting vehicles.
- Whenever feasible, use scheduling, occupancy limits, and seating arrangements to promote social distancing on vehicles.
- For course-related trips, or trips made by student organizations (e.g. field studies), develop transportation strategies that promote social distancing while still adhering to campus regulations (e.g. use of multiple vehicles).
- Design seating and traffic flow at transportation hubs (e.g. bus stops) to allow for greater social distancing.
- If applicable, develop process for assessing and maintaining adequate safety and cleaning protocols for outside transportation vendors who are contracted to provide transportation for students and/or employees.

Planning Considerations:

- Consider promoting, as practical for students and employees, transportation modes that allow for greater social distancing (e.g. bike-to-campus incentives).

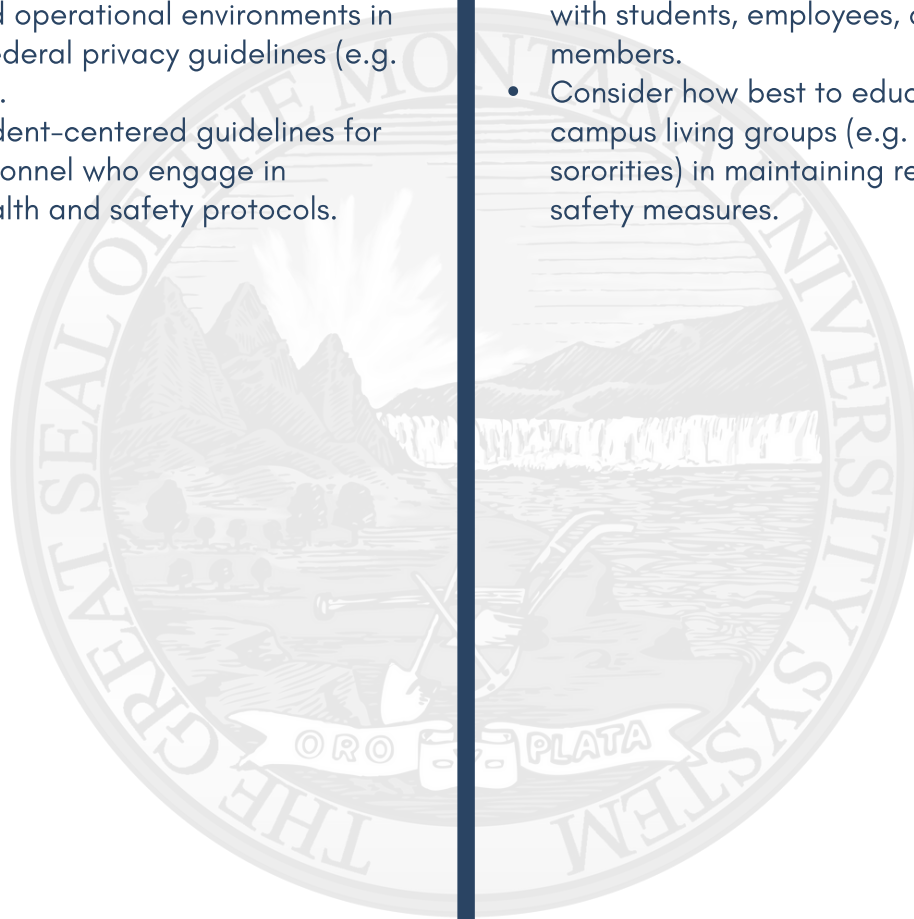
Campus Safety and Security

Essential Items:

- Develop campus safety and security plan that balances public health concerns and precautions with protecting student and campus community safety in accordance with federal guidelines (e.g. Clery, Title IX guidelines, etc.).
- Develop plans and protocols to maintain and protect student and employee privacy in remote, online, and blended operational environments in accordance with federal privacy guidelines (e.g. FERPA, HIPAA, etc.).
- Establish clear, student-centered guidelines for campus safety personnel who engage in enforcement of health and safety protocols.

Planning Considerations:

- Consider a plan and provide training for Behavioral Intervention Teams to respond to potential increases in campus student and employee concerns via in-person, hybrid, and remote environments.
- Consider developing a specific communications plan to share all policy and procedure changes with students, employees, and community members.
- Consider how best to educate and support off-campus living groups (e.g. fraternities and sororities) in maintaining relevant health and safety measures.



Healthy MUS Task Force

Members and Staff

- **Sandy Bauman**, Dean/CEO, Helena College UM
- **Carina Beck**, Director, Allen Yarnell Center for Student Success, Montana State University
- **Les Cook**, Chancellor, Montana Technological University
- **Leanne Frost**, Executive Director of Instruction, Great Falls College MSU
- **Stephanie Gray**, Dean, Gallatin College MSU
- **Kimberly Hayworth**, Vice Chancellor for Student Access and Success, MSU Billings
- **Nicole Hazelbaker**, Dean of Students, The University of Montana Western
- **Reed Humphrey**, Acting Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Montana
- **Dave Krueger**, Dean, College of Technical Sciences, MSU Northern
- **Bob Mokwa**, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Montana State University
- **Brock Tessman** (chair), ARSA Deputy Commissioner, Montana University System
- **Steve Thompson**, Director of Campus Recreation, University of Montana
- **Crystine Miller** (staff), Director of Student Affairs and Student Engagement, Montana University System
- **Rebecca Power** (staff), Academic Initiatives Analyst, Montana University System

Appendix A: State & National Resources

Note: In the dynamic and evolving public health situation, resources and guidelines are frequently updated. Please check resources to ensure that you are referencing the most up-to-date version. Links updated Jan. 13, 2021.

Public Health Guidelines & Information

Center for Disease Control (CDC) COVID-19 website

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

“Communication Resources” (Center for Disease Control)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/index.html>

“COVID-19 Information & Updates” (Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services)

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt>

“COVID-19 Public Advice” (World Health Organization)

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

“Prevention Guidance” (Center for Disease Control)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/index.html>

“Workplaces & Businesses: Plan, Prepare, and Respond” (Center for Disease Control)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/workplaces-businesses/index.html>

Higher Education Guidance

American College Health Association Resources & Information

https://www.acha.org/ACHA/Resources/Topics/2019_Novel_Coronavirus_2019-nCoV.aspx?utm_source=ACHA&utm_medium=homepage_slider

CDC Guidelines and Resources for Colleges & Universities

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/index.html>

“Colleges’ Plans for Reopening in Fall” (The Chronicle of Higher Education, last update October 1, 2020)

https://www.chronicle.com/article/Here-s-a-List-of-Colleges-/248626?cid=wcontentgrid_hp_1b

Considerations for Reopening Institutions of Higher Education for the Spring Semester 2021 (American College Health Association)

https://www.acha.org/documents/resources/guidelines/ACHA_Considerations_for_Reopening_IHEs_for_Spring_2021.pdf

COVID-19 Key Issues (Education Commission of the States)

<https://www.ecs.org/covid-19-update/>

Higher Education Guidance (*continued*)

“COVID-19 Information” (National Science Foundation)

https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/coronavirus/

COVID-19 Policy & Advocacy (American Council on Education)

<https://www.acenet.edu/Policy-Advocacy/Pages/COVID-19-Policy-Developments.aspx>

“Coronavirus COVID-19 Resources” (CUPAHR)

<https://www.cupahr.org/knowledge-center/covid-19-resources/>

“COVID-19 Resources” (Association on Higher Education & Disability)

<https://www.ahead.org/professional-resources/coronavirus-resources>

“COVID-19 Web Center” (National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators)

<https://www.nasfaa.org/covid19>

Live Coronavirus Updates (Chronicle of Higher Education)

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/live-coronavirus-updates-heres-the-latest>

Montana University System COVID-19 Mental Health Toolkit

<https://mus.edu/che/arsa/mentalhealthtoolkit/>

NCAA COVID-19 Resources and Information

<https://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/covid-19-coronavirus>

Navigating COVID-19 (National Association of College & University Business Offices and University Risk Management & Insurance Association)

<https://www.nacubo.org/Topics/COVID-19>

Cleaning

“Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-Emergency Transport Vehicles” (Center for Disease Control)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/disinfecting-transport-vehicles.html>

“Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes” (Center for Disease Control)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

Travel

“COVID-19 Travel Guidance” (Center for Disease Control)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

“COVID-19 Traveler Information” (U.S. Department of State)

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/covid-19-information.html>

Housing

"Future of Housing Work Group" (Association of College and University Housing Officers)

<https://www.acuho-i.org/resources/cid/7357>

"Guidance on Shared or Congregate Housing" (Center for Disease Control)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/shared-congregate-house/guidance-shared-congregate-housing.html>

Vaccines

COVID-19 Vaccination (Center for Disease Control)

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/index.html>

COVID-19 Vaccination Plan Information for Montana (Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services)

<https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusvaccine>

Appendix B: Face Covering Requirement

July 18, 2020

Updated MUS Healthy Fall 2020 Planning Guidelines: Face Covering Requirement

The following update is pursuant to the July 8, 2020 recommendation of the MUS Healthy Fall 2020 Task Force. As soon as possible, but no later than August 1, 2020 – in accordance with the guidelines, exceptions, and accommodations outlined below – all campuses of the Montana University System (MUS) will articulate and implement practices and protocols requiring students, employees, and visitors to wear a face covering while on MUS campus properties and leased facilities.

Campuses will articulate practices and protocols that require face coverings in all indoor spaces (with some notable exceptions listed below), and all enclosed or partially enclosed outdoor spaces. Face coverings will be required in all outdoor spaces where social distancing is not possible or difficult to reliably maintain. In outdoor settings where social distancing is possible, face coverings continue to be strongly recommended. Campus requirements will apply to all MUS students and employees, and all visitors including service providers, contractors, vendors, suppliers, families, and community members.

Campus face covering requirements will supplement measures such as social distancing, frequent handwashing, and frequent cleaning of office, work, and living spaces, already outlined in the June 1, 2020 release of the MUS Healthy Fall 2020 Planning Guidelines that were provided to campuses to follow as they developed their individual campus plans (<https://mus.edu/coronavirus/MUS-Healthy-Fall-2020-Planning-Guidelines.pdf>).

CDC guidance suggests that face coverings may help reduce the spread of COVID-19 when they are widely used in public settings (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>). Face coverings help prevent people who are unaware they have the virus and are either asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic from unknowingly spreading it to others.

What Counts as a Face Covering?

Appropriate face coverings are those that cover the mouth and nose of the wearer. Following CDC guidance, effective face coverings include simple cloth masks, scarves, buffs, or bandanas.

Based on CDC guidance, the most effective face coverings should:

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face;
- securely stay in place, covering the nose and mouth;
- include multiple layers of fabric;
- allow for breathing without restriction; and
- be able to be laundered and machine-dried without damaging them or changing their shape.

While not ideal, disposable, single use paper masks are also acceptable when another face covering option is not available. Unless in healthcare or other specialized settings, N95 or surgical masks should not be used as they are critical supplies and should be reserved for healthcare workers and other first responders.

While plastic face shields are not considered a face covering under the guidelines outlined above, face shields may be used in instances where an individual can consistently and reliably maintain appropriate social distancing and where the University has expressly approved the use of the face shield instead of a cloth mask. Such instances may include, but not be limited to, ADA and other medical accommodations. If an individual is approved to use a plastic face shield, the shield should cover from above the eyes to below the chin to reduce the risk of the spread of respiratory particles.

Exceptions

Campuses will articulate practices and protocols that allow students, employees, and visitors to be exempt from face covering requirements in the following circumstances:

- when alone in an office, enclosed study area, or other space where permitted by official notice;
- when in campus residence hall rooms or apartments; however, face coverings are still required in common areas such as hallways and when visiting other rooms;
- when eating or drinking in a situation where social distancing is practiced;
- when working or spending time outdoors (e.g. walking, exercising) and at least a six-foot distance can be consistently and reliably maintained;
- in instances or spaces (such as welding labs, nursing labs, etc.) in which other requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE) make it either impractical or unsafe to wear an additional face covering;
- when alone in a vehicle or utility vehicle used for MUS business; however, face coverings are required in vehicles used for MUS business when there is more than one person inside the vehicle; and
- when an accommodation is necessary as indicated by a medical or similar subject matter expert and granted by express written permission of the University.

In accordance with CDC guidelines, children under the age of two, those who cannot physically remove a face covering without assistance, or those who have requested and received a necessary accommodation are not required to wear face coverings.

Accommodations

Furthermore, campuses will articulate practices and protocols that allow for individuals with circumstances that require an exception to the face covering requirement – as indicated by a medical or similar subject matter professional – to request one from the University. To request an exception, employees should contact their campus human resources department. Campuses should direct students seeking an accommodation to contact the campus student affairs office and/or the campus disability resource center.

Accountability

Each campus will articulate accountability practices and protocols for students and employees to follow in reporting and responding to non-compliance in classrooms and other learning, work, and campus spaces. Campus accountability practices and protocols should emphasize the importance of communication and promote ample opportunities for compliance. In the event of willful non-compliance, campuses should articulate practices and protocols that are aligned with existing student conduct and classroom management policies and guidelines. Students, employees, and visitors engaging in sustained, willful non-compliance may be directed to leave campus spaces, taken off duty, and in certain cases subject to disciplinary action.

Campus practices and protocols should articulate for employees how to report and respond to non-compliance in classroom settings and other learning, work, and campus environments. Specific practices and protocols can be tailored to each campus but must meet the following objectives:

- Clearly communicate the face covering requirement and accountability practices and protocols to students and employees so they are applied consistently to all classroom, learning, work, and other environments across campus. (e.g. consistent language addressing the face covering requirement should appear on all course syllabi).
- Clarify existing, relevant campus policies and the extent to which they allow classroom instructors to manage their classroom learning environment by directing non-compliant students to leave the classroom and, if necessary, to end a particular class meeting in response to a disruptive or aggressive student.
- Outline graduated accountability measures that match the intensity of non-compliance. For example, isolated, unintentional instances of non-compliance (e.g. a student forgetting to bring a face covering to class) should be met with an opportunity to comply (e.g. reminding the student of the requirement and providing a single use face covering). On the other hand, repeated, willful non-compliance (e.g. a student who refuses to wear a face covering in a classroom setting, even after multiple requests and being offered a free face covering) can be addressed more directly (e.g. directing the student to leave the classroom space or ending the class meeting if the student refuses to leave). Repeated, willful non-compliance should be reported to the appropriate department/division head and may lead to disciplinary action.

Accountability (continued)

For instances of non-compliance that are not covered by existing or new policies, practices, and protocols on accountability in the classroom and other learning settings, employees should share any concerns about non-compliance with their immediate supervisor or department/division head and students should share any concerns about non-compliance with a campus student affairs officer.

Employee and Student Awareness

Prior to the start of the Fall 2020 semester, each institution must develop and implement a training strategy for all employees that ensures they have a clear understanding of their campus' face covering requirement and accountability practices and protocols. In addition, students should be made aware of the ways in which the face covering requirement will be enforced by employees prior to the start of the Fall 2020 semester.



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: January 6, 2021

Subject: **COVID-19 UPDATE: Guidelines for Targeted Return Testing - Spring 2021 Semester**

As we approach the Spring 2021 Semester, campuses across the Montana University System will continue to employ a multi-layered response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Campuses should continue to communicate with students and employees about expectations for responsible behavior during winter break and the policies and protocols that will be in place throughout the spring semester. As more information becomes available, campuses should also update students and employees on vaccination procedures and timetables.

Of course, our urgent focus is on the “January return” of thousands of MUS students to our campus communities. In addition to reiterating the approach outlined in my December 17, 2020 memorandum, I **write today to announce that MUS campuses with substantial residential student populations will be able to conduct targeted return testing of asymptomatic students living in residence halls.** This testing, which will use the existing state inventory of rapid response BinaxNOW COVID-19 Ag Cards, is only possible because of our partnership with state leadership, including the Montana Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS). The BinaxNOW tests are on hand, and are easy to distribute, store, and use on all campuses. They offer results within 15-30 minutes, and they are processed on site, without any significant laboratory or technological infrastructure.

Campuses should follow the basic targeted return testing parameters outlined below, even as they develop specific processes and plans that reflect different start dates, different student populations, and other unique considerations. Throughout their planning, campus leadership should coordinate with my office to confirm the number of tests available, ensure prompt delivery of BinaxNOW test cards to campus, and maintain proper reporting of results to local and state public health offices.

January 2021 Targeted Return Testing Parameters

1. Testing will take place on MUS campuses with substantial residence hall populations: Montana State University, the University of Montana, Montana Technological University, Montana State University – Billings, Montana State University – Northern, and the University of Montana – Western.
2. Testing will be completed within two weeks of the start of Spring 2021 classes on each campus.
3. **Campuses should ask all students in Group 1 to be tested.** Group 1 consists of students living in residence halls who are returning to campus from locations outside Montana.
4. **Campuses should encourage all students in Group 2 to be tested.** Group 2 consists of students living in residence halls who are not returning to campus from locations outside Montana.

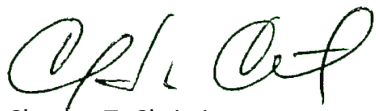
5. **Pending test availability, campuses should make tests available to all students in Group 3.**

Group 3 includes all other students who are taking in-person classes on campus.

Additional testing may be conducted pending test availability and coordination with OCHE. Campuses will coordinate directly with Diedra Murray at OCHE (dmurray@montana.edu) as testing and reporting plans are developed, including any requests for additions or changes to the group definitions outlined above.

Our targeted return testing is not meant to be a standalone approach – it is a supplement to the wide range of measures that comprise our comprehensive COVID-19 response plan. Importantly, our overall testing strategy this spring will be much like Fall 2020 in that our focus will remain on the rapid testing, diagnosis and isolation of symptomatic individuals, supplemented by rapid tracing and isolation of those who have had close contact with positive COVID-19 cases. Also like the fall, we will conduct daily situational assessments and remain flexible as new opportunities or challenges emerge. Most of all, our students and employees will continue to benefit from the coordination of our COVID-19 response across the Montana University System and our strong partnership with the Board of Regents, Governor's Office, state and local public health authorities, and other leaders from across Montana.

Thank you for your work and leadership as we enter 2021 with strength, purpose, and optimism.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clayton T. Christian'.

Clayton T. Christian
Commissioner of Higher Education