

## Follow-up to Tuesday's message

University Marketing & Communications <ucomm@uwlax.edu>

Fri 8/6/2021 4:39 PM

To: University Marketing & Communications <ucomm@uwlax.edu>

Greetings students and colleagues,

After our mask recommendation was announced on Tuesday, we received numerous comments and questions covering a wide range of topics. We thought it would be helpful if we sent some follow-up information. (Apologies. This is a long one.)

**Mitigating the risks of severe COVID.** *(You name it, we've heard it. From "please, don't tell me this year will be a repeat of last year" to "I'd be more comfortable if we did exactly what we did last year.")*

There are many tools in the toolbox for *helping* limit the transmission of respiratory viruses. None of them offer 100% protection, but they all *help*. Mask-wearing indoors *helps* prevent transmission of droplets and vapors. Physical distancing and using the outdoors more *helps*. Vaccination it's a huge *help* in preventing infections. And it goes on. When these tools are used together, we are able to help mitigate the risks presented by COVID.

Last year, before COVID-19 vaccination was an option, the primary tools we depended on as a campus were physical distancing, regular testing, and mask wearing. Physical distancing meant having more online and hybrid classes, limiting activities and gatherings to "de-densify" campus spaces. While highly effective from a public health standpoint, physical distancing made it challenging to have the vibrant, connected experience we all want out of campus life.

Now that vaccination is a safe and widely available option, the primary tools we will depend on as a campus will be vaccination, entry-month testing for unvaccinated residents, and (at least, at this time) mask wearing. It is our plan to have other things back to normal – classes, activities, organizations, sports, performances, experiential learning and volunteer opportunities – but in order to do those things, we are counting on our campus community to get vaccinated and be willing to wear a mask indoors.

These are easy steps to take that will allow us to live and learn together the way we love most. Providing a safe and secure college and employment experience is one of UWL's most important priorities, and we hope you'll join us in that effort.

**Testing of unvaccinated resident students** *(Why aren't we testing everyone regardless of vaccination status?)*

It has been pointed out that it is possible for vaccinated individuals to carry the virus even without symptoms. CDC guidance informs us that fully vaccinated people who become infected with the Delta variant can transmit it to others, however, infections happen in only a small proportion of people who are fully vaccinated even with the Delta variant, and severe disease for them is exceedingly rare.

In our context, the greatest risk comes from bringing together unvaccinated, untested (in other words – potentially unknowingly COVID positive and otherwise unprotected) students from all around the globe into a congregant living setting with other unprotected students, therefore that is one of the primary areas of risk we are focusing our mitigation efforts on. Students living on campus can either show that they're vaccinated or show that they're COVID negative throughout September – but students are expected to meet one of those two expectations to help limit the potential for a surge of COVID cases at the start of the semester.

**Vaccination reporting and incentives** *(What's the point if we're being asked to wear masks anyway?)*

Lots of questions are coming our way about vaccination, the survey and the incentive programs. We will be communicating in detail about those items early next week.

**Indoor mask recommendation** *(You said we didn't have to wear masks in July. What gives!?)*

The state of the pandemic is constantly changing and therefore so must our response. Things look different today than they did on July 7<sup>th</sup> and understandably that is frustrating to some. But we will manage it to our best ability together, and right now, we're asking folks join together in adding the layer of protection indoors that masks offer.

The entire executive policy group is grateful to each of you for following the information closely. We will continue to work our very hardest to serve campus through thoughtful decision-making processes and thorough communication.

Thanks so much,



**Maren Walz**, Executive Director for University Marketing & Communications

[mwalz@uwlax.edu](mailto:mwalz@uwlax.edu) | 115 Graff Main Hall | 608.785.8574

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

[Submit a request to UComm, ask a question](#)

