

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

CHANCELLOR GOW ANNOUNCES UW-LA CROSSE MASK REQUIREMENT TO MINIMIZE SPREAD OF COVID-19

While the State of Wisconsin is currently seeing a reduction in the number of new COVID-19 cases, the continued use of face coverings is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), local health departments and healthcare professionals as an easy way to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. Many medical professionals and public health experts believe that wearing face coverings is the simplest way to slow and prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus without requiring people stay in their homes.

Effective August 5, Governor Evers required all state employees, regardless of vaccination status, to [wear face coverings when inside state facilities](#) and to encourage all members of the public to do so as well. While this requirement did not apply to UW System employees and our facilities, we will also adopt this requirement in recognition of the importance of face masks to reduce the threat of widespread infection by virus variants.

In addition, use of the highly effective COVID-19 vaccines has been demonstrated to significantly protect individuals from the virus and from its serious and harmful health effects, the need for hospitalization and even from death. UW-La Crosse has provided free vaccinations for employees and students and encourages everyone to be vaccinated. For those individuals who are unable to receive the vaccine or choose not to, frequent testing has also been shown to help slow the spread, by identifying individuals who may have the virus, quarantining them and contact tracing.

Based upon the foregoing, Chancellor Gow requires the following as necessary to prevent, suppress and control the spread of COVID-19 on all of the UW-La Crosse campus. This is in accordance with authority granted under the following statutes and administrative codes: Wis. Stat. sec. 36, and Wis. Admin. Code secs. UWS 17-18¹.

This order becomes effective Friday, August 27, 2021. The order will expire on September 30, 2021 unless extended, terminated, or otherwise modified based on changing conditions related the COVID-19 Delta (or other) variants, including but not limited to changes in CDC guidance, state and local public health conditions, and campus safety.

1. Face Coverings. Face covering means a piece of cloth or other material that is worn to cover the nose and mouth completely. A face covering must be secured to the head and must fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face. Cloth face coverings must be made with two or more layers of breathable fabric that is tightly woven. A face covering does not include bandanas, single layer neck gaiters, or masks with slits, exhalation valves, or punctures because public health experts have determined that these types of coverings are ineffective at preventing respiratory droplets from entering the air. Face shields are acceptable as a face covering and can be used by an instructor or student in a classroom.

a. Face Covering Required. Every individual, regardless of vaccination status, who enters campus lands shall wear a face covering:

- i. In all indoor public spaces except students in their assigned residence hall rooms and employees when alone in a private, unshared office or lab and
- ii. While riding a campus shuttle or when two or more people are present in a university vehicle.

¹ This order is being issued pursuant to the authority vested in me by the laws of the State of Wisconsin and applicable policies in the University of Wisconsin System, including but not limited to: Wis. Stats. ss. 36.11(1)(a) and (c), 36.09(1)(a), (f) and (L), 36.35(2) and 101.11; Wis. Admin. Code ss. UWS 18.11(6)(a) and (7)(e), UWS 18.08(9)(b), UWS 18.13, UWS 17.09(1), (14) and (15); and Regent Policy 23-2.

b. Exceptions. Requests for exceptions to this order should be made to the Dean of Students for students and to Human Resources for employees and will be evaluated on an individualized basis utilizing the interactive reasonable accommodations process.

2. Enforcement. The UW-La Crosse Office of Human Resources, Office of Student Life, and University Police Department are authorized to enforce this order. Violations may result in employee discipline, student discipline citation and/or fine under UWS Chapter 18, UW System Administrative Policy 1292, and/or the UW-La Crosse Workplace Conduct Expectations.

3. Duration. The mask requirement is effective Friday, August 27, 2021 and will remain until September 30, 2021 at which time they will be re-assessed, based on the level of community transmission decreasing to a moderate (yellow) rate and the University receiving assurance from our local health departments that the requirements can be lifted.