August 9, 2021

Dear Campus Community,

As we gather in the coming weeks, preparing for the start of the fall semester and a return to a full-campus experience, I am writing to share an update on the substantive measures we will have in place to protect public health and safety. This includes important news about vaccination requirements and the adoption of a face-covering requirement for indoor public spaces designed to deter spread of the COVID-19 Delta variant. The mask requirement starts August 11 and will be reviewed in mid-September.

**Vaccinations are the most important protection against COVID-19.** I am pleased to report that 96 percent of our domestic undergraduate and graduate students are in compliance with the university’s COVID-19 vaccination requirement. This rate is truly impressive, and I thank our students for doing their part to advance a safe and healthy campus. Work is underway to ensure full compliance. The great majority of international students are also vaccinated. We know some international students have been unable to access a vaccination, and we are working closely to ensure proper entry into the U.S. per Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance, as well as arranging for vaccinations upon arrival in Amherst.

**Meanwhile, to further protect our community, the university will require faculty and staff to be vaccinated.** This requirement follows agreements reached in recent days with our labor unions. They have prioritized the health and safety of their members throughout the pandemic, and we know a significant number of employees have already received shots. Faculty and staff will receive a follow-up message shortly from Human Resources with additional information.

**The campus mask requirement for indoor public spaces is in concert with new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, issued in response to the concerning Delta variant.** This requirement follows review of the most recent scientific evidence that finds fully vaccinated people infected with the Delta variant can potentially spread the virus to others. Indoor mask wearing is particularly important to mitigate the spread from asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic carriers who are not aware they are infectious, and when other public health measures such as social distancing are not possible. [FAQs about the indoor mask requirement can be found on the university’s coronavirus website](#), and students will also receive an email with additional details.

The Public Health Promotion Center continues to operate the walk-in [UMass Vaccine Clinic](#) and also offers asymptomatic testing. Symptomatic testing is available through University Health Services. [For additional information, view related vaccination and testing FAQs](#).

I am confident that with everyone’s cooperation we will make the return to campus a safe and welcoming experience.
Sincerely,
Chancellor Kumble R. Subbaswamy

University of Massachusetts Amherst