



July 30, 2021

To members of the OU community,

I hope you all have had a good summer, with opportunities to rest and recharge before the start of the new academic year.

I think that we all were hopeful that the availability of safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 would put this trying pandemic behind us. And I suspect we were all pretty happy to stuff our facemasks into the back of a drawer, as Marjorie and I did when we moved into Granger House.

Unfortunately, as you all know, the spread of the Delta variant in recent weeks and the widespread hesitancy regarding vaccination has led to another spike in cases nationally. As a result, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has offered new guidance, recommending that even vaccinated individuals “wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission.” CDC data currently indicates high transmission in Franklin and Johnson Counties, Kansas, and in Maricopa County, Arizona, and substantial transmission in Waukesha County, Wisconsin.

I know that we are all tired of masking up, but in light of the new guidance and with the health and safety of our students, faculty, staff, and communities foremost in mind, we have updated our campus policies regarding mask use.

Effective today, masks are required indoors, on all OU campuses, for everyone, both vaccinated and unvaccinated. Masks will not be required in non-public spaces with restricted access, such as offices. Those who are not yet fully vaccinated should continue to wear masks in all locations on campus, including outdoors. As before, specific exemptions will be made for those with medical conditions and more detailed guidelines may apply in certain spaces and situations. More details are provided in the attached “Quick Reference Guide.”

Let me stress that we continue to expect all members of our community, who are able to do so, to be vaccinated. If you had not yet been vaccinated, please, please consider doing so as soon as possible: the surest path out of this pandemic and back to a safer, mask-less world is through the vaccination of as many people as possible.

While this information applies to all members of all OU campus communities, please be aware that campus-specific protocols may be more strict related to our students and student athletes as Campus Leadership Teams are monitoring requirements at a more specific level (residence hall living, athletic participation, classroom settings, dining facility requirements, etc.).

As we have learned over the course of this global health emergency, new developments can emerge quickly and scientific recommendations can evolve. We will continue to monitor federal, state, and local guidance on addressing COVID-19 and, as necessary, will continue to update our protocols based on the best scientific evidence available.

I truly regret that we need to take these steps and that we’ll all face the start of another semester with our masks on, but it is the right thing to do as we strive to be safe and healthy, to look out for each other, and to get past this seemingly endless pandemic.

With many thanks and all the best for the busy days ahead,

William M. Tsutsui
President and CEO
Professor of History