



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

March 4, 2022

Dear UNE Community,

Last week the U.S. CDC announced new metrics to determine masking guidance nationwide. These guidelines are based on a county-by-county analysis of COVID-19 cases combined with local hospital data. Yesterday, the CDC announced that all counties in Maine are now considered medium risk for COVID-19, and that masking indoors is no longer recommended in the state for most individuals.

With this latest CDC guidance, the steady decline in positive cases among the UNE community, the easing burden the pandemic is placing on local hospitals, and our vaccination and booster requirements, we feel confident that we are ready to shift away from mandatory indoor masking for those who are vaccinated.

Effective Monday, March 7, masks will be optional in most indoor spaces for vaccinated individuals, with the following exceptions:

- Health care delivery spaces such as the Student Health Centers, Oral Health Center, OMM Clinic, dental hygiene clinics, and athletic training room
- Some clinical skills and lab spaces, which will be identified and communicated to students, faculty, and professional staff by their respective academic program leadership
- UNE vehicles, such as safe ride, the Portland Campus shuttle, and transportation for athletics or field trips off campus
- Students engaged in off-campus experiences must continue to follow the masking guidelines of those spaces.

Those who have received a medical or religious exemption from the COVID-19 vaccine must continue to mask while indoors.

I want to highlight two important points as we make this transition. First, there is no guarantee that we will never have to revert to an indoor mask mandate. New variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 continue to emerge, and we may find that we need to reinstate mandatory masking at some point to manage its spread. Second, I want to emphasize how important it is that we welcome mask wearing by any student, faculty member, or member of the professional staff who chooses to do so. Everyone has a different comfort level and risk tolerance when it comes to COVID-19, and the CDC continues to

recommend masking for people with specific health risks. In this context, UNE will be a place where individuals are welcome to wear masks if they choose to do so.

Together, we have made great strides in managing through the pandemic and keeping one another safe, and I am very pleased we are finally able to lift this requirement. I know it has not been easy, and that the pandemic continues to deliver challenges for us all. Thank you for everything you have done to get us to this important milestone.

Sincerely,

James D. Herbert
President