



Announcing a temporary change in pandemic protocol on EMU main campus

President's Office <pres_office@emu.edu>

Mon, Aug 9, 2021 at 11:22 AM



Good Monday greetings to the EMU Community. It is another beautiful day in the Shenandoah Valley. We are eager to welcome our students to campus in just a few short weeks. We miss you and the vitality you bring to our community of learners.

In May, we signaled that we intend to resume a "new normal" for the fall, including a full return to in-person classrooms, student life and other activities. We also signaled that we would continue to closely monitor the direction and intensity of COVID-19. Last week, the nation saw a surge of the new, more contagious Delta variant. With only a little more than half of the country fully vaccinated, hospitals in some areas are at dangerous capacity levels. **The CDC has now updated its masking recommendation for people gathering indoors in public spaces, even among vaccinated people.**

We are so very pleased by our campus vaccination rates (90% for faculty and staff and 80% for students). Yeah! Go Royals! Yet we are learning that the Delta variant is occurring in younger people, including children who cannot be vaccinated; that the Delta variant can be transmitted by vaccinated people (often asymptotically); and that herd immunity now needs to be at 90%, not 75%. We also know that our students come from all over the country and the world where the Delta variant is raging.

With this in mind, and to create a safe environment for all our campus, **we will observe, like many universities, a temporary mask requirement for all students, faculty, staff and visitors who gather in public indoor spaces on the EMU main campus beginning August 16.** We anticipate this mask requirement will last only a couple of weeks including through move-in days and the first few weeks of classes. It will only pertain to indoor public spaces where groups of people gather, excluding places for eating.

This step may be disappointing for many of you, but it is a minor inconvenience and a prudent way to keep our community safe from this dangerous virus. We remain thankful for the free and accessible vaccine that prevents the worst outcomes of the virus. We remain thankful for the high vaccination rate among our campus community. And we will continue to encourage others to sign up for vaccines in the coming weeks and provide access if necessary. Once the temporary mask requirement ends, we will resume our requirement that all unvaccinated persons continue to wear masks in indoor spaces.

Additional information will be coming soon. Please check your email and other communication channels as we Work Together to provide a safe educational space for our academic year to commence!

I pray for travel mercies for all in our campus community. Blessings on your life and work in these remaining weeks!

Warmly,

Susan

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Susan Schultz Huxman, Ph.D.
President
Eastern Mennonite University

540-432-4100
www.emu.edu



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