

Dear Yote Family,

We are writing to provide an update on COVID-19 conditions and planning related to the first two weeks of the fall term. In doing so, we wish to express our heartfelt appreciation to everyone involved in keeping our community safe. The reopening of the College, marking the end of an historic 18-month period of distance learning, has been filled with sense of celebration and, of course, a few challenges. One constant has been the goodwill, alignment, and extraordinary effort from our community. Sustaining this effort will be key to remaining in-person for the remainder of the semester.

Ensuring timely and accurate information about the pandemic is always a challenge. In the past few days, we have repeatedly encountered rumors about an imminent college shift to distance learning and a particular number of cases (20) that will trigger the shift. **This is completely untrue.** Our rate of infection is within institutional capacity, vaccinated members remain protected from serious illness, and community spread is almost entirely limited to contexts in which masks are not worn.

In the interest of improving everyone's access to reliable information, we are adding a weekly roundup to our efforts going forward. Look for a note like this one to be sent early each week providing a summary of key metrics, policy updates, and other related information. In addition, you can always contact members of the administration with any questions that arise. Contact information for key personnel appears at the end of this note.

Now for the updates:

- **Protecting Yourself:** Vaccinations remain the very best and safest protection against COVID-19. The data continue to demonstrate emphatically that being vaccinated dramatically reduces your chances of infection, serious illness, hospitalization, and death. Our community vaccination rates currently sit at 84% of all students, 90% of reporting staff, and 100% of reporting faculty (student percentages are based on mandatory reporting; staff and faculty percentages are derived from surveys).
- **Infection Rates:** Our community infection rates throughout reopening have remained within expectations and institutional capacity for accommodation. We witnessed few active cases during the first week, then a jump in cases during the second week. At the time of this writing, there are two COVID-19 positive students isolating on campus, ten students off campus, and one hospitalization; no employees are known to have active cases at this time. The current rate of active infection represents 0.8% of our community.
- **Mask Policy:** In keeping with the policy requirement previously announced for reopening campus, masks are required in all campus buildings except when eating or drinking in the cafeteria or when alone in offices or private residence hall rooms. According to the [CDC masking advisory](#), you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings, although you should consider wearing one in crowded outdoor settings and for activities with close contact with others who are not fully vaccinated. Compliance with masking policy has been high in many contexts but mixed in others; additional steps are being taken to increase compliance in all contexts.
- **Safety in the Classroom:** Consistent with reports from colleges across the nation, risk in classroom settings is extremely low. We have yet to receive confirmation of any community spread inside classrooms, and classroom policies involving seating charts and contact tracing have proven highly effective thus far. Online "fire drills"—practice sessions in which classes have been asked to shift online in order to familiarize everyone with the process and troubleshoot

any problems—are largely complete. These were held in case a temporary period of reduced contact becomes necessary on campus at any point during the semester.

- **Change in Reporting:** Previously, the Office of Human Resources and Student COVID Coordinator have sent a note to the campus community each time a person in our community tested positive for COVID-19. Going forward, that practice will be discontinued and instead the information will be added to the campus [dashboard](#), which is updated daily, and included in the weekly summaries distributed by email. Our intention by this adjustment is to provide on-demand access to the most current measures as well as a context for understanding those measures.
- **President Biden’s COVID-19 Action Plan:** During the past week, President Biden announced a [6-point plan](#) to address the pandemic nationally. This plan includes the requirement for all employers with 100+ employees to ensure their workers are vaccinated or tested weekly. Together with the Food and Drug Administration’s recent full approval of the Pfizer vaccine and the increasing availability of quick, accurate, and inexpensive testing options, this means that broader requirements for vaccination and/or testing for employees and students are likely to come our way soon. Discussion is already underway with campus leadership and we’ll keep you informed of any changes as they happen.

Thank you once again for your continued attention to community safety. We look forward to providing you with another update next week.

David Douglass, Dean of Faculty

Paul Bennion, Dean of Students

Contact Information:

- For questions related to **Academic Affairs**, including classroom instruction, write to Stacy Palmer and David Douglass (spalmer@collegeofidaho.edu and ddouglass@collegeofidaho.edu)
- For questions related to **Athletics**, contact Reagan Rossi (rrossi@collegeofidaho.edu)
- For questions related to employee or external constituent **Event Planning**, contact Kollin Walker (kwalker@collegeofidaho.edu)
- For questions related to **Residence Life**, including the cafeteria and residence halls, write to Matt Gier (mgier@collegeofidaho.edu)
- For questions related to **Student Life**, including clubs, organizations, and student event planning, contact Erin Lasher (elasher@collegeofidaho.edu)
- For health-related questions, including testing, quarantine, isolation, and reporting, contact Dawn Fredrickson or Natalie Davison at the **Wellness Center** (dawnfrederickson@collegeofidaho.edu or ndavison@collegeofidaho.edu)



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