



The Return of the Flock

EMAIL TO THE WASHINGTON COLLEGE COMMUNITY: Update to the College's Mask Policy – 3/4/22

To the Washington College Community,

Based on the newly released guidance from the CDC around face masks and based on Kent County's classification of a Low Community Transmission rate, we are transitioning the campus from a universal indoor mask mandate to being **mask optional**.

Given our **low risk levels, our high vaccination rate**, and this new information from the CDC, it is reasonable to move to a place where the choice to wear a mask or not is solely up to the individual, to be made based on their own personal risk factors and level of comfort.

We **strongly recommend the continued use of face masks in indoor public settings in the following scenarios:**

- You are experiencing any **cold or flu-like symptoms** at all, even if mild. Those who become symptomatic should seek a COVID test ASAP as well.
- You have had a **close contact exposure** to someone who tested positive.
- You are **unvaccinated or are not yet fully vaccinated**, to include the booster shot.
- You have **underlying health concerns** that increase your personal risk factors.

Wearing a **face mask is always an option and** will remain so. As a community, we should be sensitive to the fact that some classmates and colleagues **will prefer to continue to wear a mask indoors** and be supportive and respectful of that decision. N95 and KN95 masks have been **proven to be effective in safeguarding the wearer**, even when others around them are unmasked.

On the flip side, **feeling comfortable with not wearing a mask indoors is also a choice that is to be respected.**

This is a campus-wide policy which means that individuals **should not be overriding this policy** with mask requirements in their own classes, groups, etc. That does not mean that we can't have conversations with our peers and students about what's best for us and our groups. There are many avenues for those who are anxious about the removal of the requirement to take **personal action** to protect themselves.

While mask-optional means that no one will be required to wear a mask in any learning spaces (classes, labs, etc.) we do know that there are some physical spaces where groups may be working in close proximity for extended periods of time. We encourage anyone in this setting to consider if this might be cause to continue with personal mask-wearing.



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Face masks will **continue to be a requirement** for anyone who is visiting **Health Services or the Counseling Center**, as well as anyone who has an appointment for COVID testing.

This mask-optional setting is **wholly contingent** upon our current Low status for Community Transmission, taken together with our very low numbers on campus. **It is subject to change** should either one of those conditions change.

With Spring Break looming there is the potential for travel to areas that have a higher transmission rate, so we urge anyone who is traveling to exercise caution while away, and to continue to follow standard safety practices. We also encourage you to plan now for a return COVID test if you plan to travel over Spring Break. You can make an appointment via the Student Health Portal.

While this situation remains fluid and we can't predict what future challenges we may face, we are thankful to be in a stable place where we can make this change.