



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Doug Call, Chair, Faculty Senate

FROM: Kirk H. Schulz, President, Washington State University  
Elizabeth S. Chilton, Provost and Executive Vice President and Chancellor, WSU Pullman

SUBJECT: March 12 Masking Update

DATE: March 8, 2022

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We want to start by recognizing and thanking our faculty for the incredible lengths they have gone through over the last two years to ensure the safety, health, and success of our students and our institution.

We wanted to follow up on the [communication](#) released to the University community on March 1, stating that WSU will no longer require that masks be worn in most WSU buildings effective March 12—including classrooms, residence halls, recreation centers, and dining halls. Face coverings will still be required on public transit and inside some healthcare facilities, including Cougar Health Services.

As a part of this policy, instructors are not permitted to require or request that students wear masks in classrooms. The only exceptions to this are courses that

- historically (i.e., pre-pandemic) required face masks as part of the safety protocols for the course, and/or
- clinical practicum courses where wearing PPE will simulate real-world requirements (i.e. healthcare)

WSU is applying this policy system-wide to promote a successful learning environment and ease confusion for our students, faculty, and staff. Any instructors who would like to discuss accommodation options may reach out to [HRS Disability Services](#).

Throughout the pandemic, WSU has made operational decisions after careful consultation with local public health experts, the Washington State Department of Health, and other public institutions of higher education in Washington—including the March 12 masking update. WSU's high vaccination rates and extremely low instances of on-campus transmission put the institution in a good place to roll back its masking requirements, following the recommendations from the state and the CDC (*see the below chart with student testing data for WSU Pullman*). It is important to note that the public health

experts at WSU will continue to monitor the state of the COVID-19 pandemic and will recommend changes in policy as warranted.

We recognize that WSU often announces policy changes in advance of our peer institutions. This is due in large part to WSU being one of the few semester schools in the state. We start earlier than our peers, and do not have the same quarter break schedule.

While these policy changes are being made, individuals who feel more comfortable wearing a mask are encouraged to continue doing so. Vaccinations and masks (particularly well-fitting, high quality masks) remain an important mitigation tool for limiting the spread of respiratory illnesses.

Additionally, faculty, staff, students, and visitors should continue to [self-screen](#) for illness before visiting a WSU facility and stay home if they are sick. We are continuing to ask our instructors and supervisors to be flexible and equitable with students and employees who need to be absent for illness.

Finally, we want to commend the COVID Operations Team for their ongoing work in managing WSU's response to COVID-19. As we head into what is (hopefully) the endemic stage of the pandemic, we are making a change in our COVID-19 response leadership. Effective April 1, Jason Sampson, Director of Environmental Health and Safety, will take over for Hailey Rupp as the COVID-19 lead for the institution. Hailey has taken on a new role as the Deputy Chief of Staff for WSU Pullman, and we are so appreciative of her work over the previous 16 months.

