



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 8, 2020

CONTACT

Karen Ogden

Communications Director

406-449-9173 (o); 406-788-4375 (c)

kogden@montana.edu

## MUS Healthy Fall 2020 Task Force recommends campus face mask requirement

HELENA – The MUS Healthy Fall 2020 Task Force today issued a recommendation for a face mask requirement on all Montana University System campuses. Work on policy details and an implementation plan will begin as soon as possible.

Deputy Commissioner Brock Tessman, who led today’s meeting via Zoom, noted that the Task Force has supported face masks as an effective way to curb the spread of COVID-19 since its inception. He emphasized that the reconvening of the Task Force is part of a thoughtful and deliberative process as the MUS continues to evaluate and develop its response to the evolving challenges presented by COVID-19.

Last week Commissioner of Higher Education Clayton Christian called on the Task Force to reconvene based on three factors – the rising number of COVID-cases in Montana, continued evidence on the effectiveness of face masks at curbing the spread, and campus and community dialogue around the possibility of a mask requirement, including discussion at last week’s Board of Regents meeting.

“The Task Force, from its beginning, has been genuine in its commitment to hear from students, faculty, staff and the public as we develop our guidelines, and the spirit of that commitment is alive and well,” Tessman said, adding that the Task Force may reconvene again, if necessary, in response to new considerations in its work to mitigate COVID-19.

The [12-member Task Force](#), comprised of leaders from across the MUS, was established by Commissioner Christian in April to develop operational strategies to mitigate COVID-19 risk. The Task Force issued its [first set of guidelines](#) June 1 as a framework on which campuses are basing their plans to mitigate risk as students return this fall.

Members expressed clear support for a mask requirement during Wednesday's call, noting a preference for a mask policy that emphasizes a culture of community health and education.

"From the beginning of this Task Force our goal has been to develop a set of guidelines that mitigate risk and present them in a way that is engaging and understandable and encourages participation and compliance," Tessman said. "That's how we'll get the most engagement and slow the spread of COVID-19."

**Public comment:**

Please direct comments to Heather Wells at [hwells@montana.edu](mailto:hwells@montana.edu) or:

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education  
Attn: Heather Wells  
560 N. Park Ave.  
Helena, MT 59620-3201