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Chancellor Messages_Your Choice is Clear

Dannel P. Malloy

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UMS Students and Colleagues,

Late next month, you and your friends and colleagues will be coming together for the first time since the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic for one of the most exciting traditions in all of education – the fall return to a university campus. I’m happy to be among the first to say we’re ready to welcome you back!

You want to return to normal campus life – life that doesn’t include face masks and weekly COVID-19 testing, and life that doesn’t include the risk of transmitting COVID-19 by being together in person. I want that too. I want us all to share in the traditional college experiences that come from being together on our campuses – critical knowledge and learning exchanges between students, staff, and faculty in an environment of free inquiry, research, and academic freedom, and yes, community and sporting events and fun too.

But let me be clear: COVID-19 remains a grave health risk for our campus communities, particularly for the unvaccinated and medically vulnerable. Throughout UMS, before vaccines were available, we were able to be together through the last academic year only because we followed science and public health, which told us that face masking, social distancing, enhanced hygiene, and regular testing were necessary to be together safely. With the significant presence now of the very contagious Delta COVID-19 variant, along with the fact that the majority of patients requiring treatment for severe COVID-19 symptoms are not vaccinated, we have no choice but to remain vigilant and do all we can together to keep each other safe.

At the same time, let’s pause for a moment and recognize the incredible scientific achievement of the COVID-19 vaccines. A Boston-based infectious disease specialist has called the development and distribution of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines in such a short period of time to be the equivalent of putting a person on the moon. By earlier this summer, more than 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been safely administered around the globe, with nearly 335 million doses in the United States alone. These vaccines have undergone and will continue to undergo the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.

Simply put, when it comes to COVID-19, getting vaccinated makes all the difference in the world. If you can, getting vaccinated now is the safest, smartest choice. Readily available and effective COVID-19 vaccines have lowered case counts and reduced transmission and limited severity of symptoms among those who do get infected.

And getting vaccinated will allow you to return to campus this fall more normally. Students and employees who verify their vaccination status with the University of Maine System’s voluntary vaccination tracker before August 20, 2021 won’t have to do the arrival testing and quarantining practices planned for the start of the fall semester.
And there's more. More than 5,000 members of the University community have already verified their vaccination status. They'll be able to take off their masks and show their faces in university facilities starting July 26, which is when we'll join the State of Maine in lifting our indoor mask requirements for fully vaccinated students, faculty, staff, and visitors who have verified their vaccination status.

Finally, those who get vaccinated and verified now will be ready when vaccination is no longer optional. Once the FDA provides full approval for a vaccine, it will be required of every University community member who is participating in an in-person experience (unless they qualify for a medical or other recognized exception).

Weekly $1,000 Shot Clock Student Scholarships and Employee Prizes

The clock is ticking for the start of the fall semester. If you are not vaccinated, book the very next appointment available in your community and get vaccinated as soon as you can. Text your ZIP code to 438829 or call 1-800-232-0233 to find vaccine locations near you in the United States.

If you have already protected yourself with a COVID-19 vaccine, upload your status now with our vaccination tracker so you can leave your mask behind starting July 26 and be exempted from the arrival testing and quarantine practices we are planning for the start of the fall semester.

Students verifying vaccination status also are eligible to be selected as a weekly winner of a $1,000 shot clock student scholarship. Verified employees will also be selected for prize drawings every week. We expect that more people will verify their status and become eligible every week, so verify your vaccine status today to increase your chances of winning.

I know you want to put this pandemic behind us. I do too. Getting vaccinated is the best way to make that happen, and the only way to give us the kind of campus experiences we all want this fall. Please make the smart choice for all of us, and if you can, get vaccinated and verified now.

Sincerely,

Dannel P. Malloy
Chancellor

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