

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

---

University of Maine System Announcements

University of Maine System Communications

---

11-10-2020

## UMS\_COVID-19 Announcements\_UMaine System Preparing Students for a Safe Return Home at Thanksgiving

University of Maine System

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/c19\\_announcements](https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/c19_announcements)



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [History Commons](#), and the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

University of Maine System, "UMS\_COVID-19 Announcements\_UMaine System Preparing Students for a Safe Return Home at Thanksgiving" (2020). *University of Maine System Announcements*. 35.  
[https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/c19\\_announcements/35](https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/c19_announcements/35)

This Webpage is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Maine System Announcements by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact [um.library.technical.services@maine.edu](mailto:um.library.technical.services@maine.edu).



UMS News

- Press Releases
- Strategic Priorities

Media Contacts

University of Maine System,  
Chancellor's Office, & Board of Trustees:

**Dan Demeritt**  
Exec Dir of Public Affairs  
207-441-6962  
[dan.demeritt@maine.edu](mailto:dan.demeritt@maine.edu)

Campus-specific info:

- UMaine (Orono)
- UMA (Augusta)
- UMF (Farmington)
- UMFK (Fort Kent)
- UMM (Machias)
- UMPI (Presque Isle)
- USM (Portland)

Social Media



Archives

- November 2020
- October 2020
- September 2020
- August 2020
- July 2020
- June 2020
- May 2020
- April 2020
- March 2020
- January 2020
- December 2019
- November 2019
- October 2019
- September 2019
- August 2019
- July 2019
- June 2019
- May 2019
- April 2019
- March 2019
- February 2019

# UMaine System Preparing Students for a Safe Return Home at Thanksgiving

10  
NOV 2020

*With two weeks of in-person instruction remaining and COVID-19 cases on the rise, Maine's public universities announce plans to provide amplified safe departure testing for resident hall and out-of-state students. The University of Maine System also outlines the types of initiatives underway on the campuses to limit exposure to community transmission and safely complete the final two weeks of planned in-person instruction.*

Orono, Maine — The University of Maine System is responding to increased community transmission in Maine with amplified testing and plans to limit travel over the final two weeks before the [planned transition to remote instruction at Thanksgiving break](#) for the remainder of the semester. The steps are being taken to reduce the risk of infection on campus and throughout the university community, to preserve the ability of students to complete the in-person portion of the semester, and to prepare students for a safe return home to their families at Thanksgiving.

The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention requires an individual infected with COVID-19 to isolate at home until released by the public health agency. If an [order of isolation extends over the holiday break](#) a student would be required to remain in isolation that could include staying in university-supported isolation space or remaining alone and apart from others in their off-campus housing. Isolation spaces will be maintained by the universities over the Thanksgiving break to support any student prohibited from traveling.

"Our campuses are among the safest places in the country in terms of COVID exposure and case counts," said Chancellor Dannel Malloy. "Pandemic fatigue is real and community transmission is on the rise. With our students leading the way we will finish the final two weeks of in-person instruction planned for this fall and send everyone home to their families safely at the Thanksgiving break."

### Limiting Exposure To Community Transmission Over Final Two Weeks

The COVID-19 case count among commuter students and employees has been growing, but the University of Maine System still has [only five known, active cases of COVID-19 among residence hall students](#) because of active student participation in the University System's public health campaign.

Campus compliance with safety practices such as physical distancing, limited group sizes and the wearing of face coverings has been universal. Testing strategies for COVID-19 have been successful because of student engagement across repeated rounds of testing. Before the start of the semester the University of Maine System targeted parties by [providing guidance to students](#) regarding group-size limitations. Since classes began in August there has not been a single case of student conduct code suspension among the System's 26,000 students for behavior on or off campus that violates state guidance developed to limit the spread of COVID-19.

In response to the rise in community transmission and case counts and to prioritize in-person instruction Maine's public universities will be working with their pandemic response teams and others to detail and carry out a number of initiatives through the Thanksgiving break. Examples will include:

- **Emphasizing Remote Work:** Existing UMS [return to work guidance](#) encourages employees to be on campus only when necessary or substantially advantageous for academic purposes or other job duties. In-person instruction remains a priority. Supervisors and academic administrators will be asked to revisit and emphasize remote working options for employees within their units or departments whenever possible;
- **Limiting Community Access to Campus Facilities:** Access to campus facilities used by the public (e.g. recreation facilities and libraries) will be adjusted at the discretion of university and program leaders to reduce activity on campus;
- **Two-Week Pause on Appointments and Nonessential Activities:** Scheduling of new appointments for admission tours will prioritize dates and times coming after the Thanksgiving break with possible differences by campus. Previously scheduled tours may proceed with strict adherence to group size and face covering requirements or occur virtually.

University leaders are also being asked to consider delaying any nonessential work or activity that requires a campus presence until after the Thanksgiving holiday. UMaine is Maine's research university and this work is vital to the mission of public higher education in Maine. Guidance on continuing this work safely in the 20-21 academic year has been posted all semester [at this link](#).

- **Reduce Time on Campus for Commuter Students:** Non-residence students are being asked to limit their trips and time on campus to only essential academic or health-related activities;
- **Staying Safe on Campus:** Residence Hall Students are being urged to stay on campus for the final two weeks of the semester, to avoid travel beyond campus boundaries and to reduce their personal bubble of interactions as feasible.
- **Virtual Focus on Student Life Activities and Events:** To the extent possible student organizations and activities will be transitioned to virtual events.

### Safe Departure Asymptomatic Testing for 8,000 UMS Students and Employees

The seventh and final round of Phase 3 asymptomatic testing for the fall semester will be amplified to include required safe departure testing for all out-of-state and all residential students living in University housing facilities. The departure testing will largely be conducted prior to November 19 to maximize safety amidst rising cases and ensure the maximum number of participants can travel for the holiday with a negative test result in hand.

The seventh round of testing will also include testing for populations of special concern at the determination of the individual UMS universities. Examples of this cohort may include student athletes, nursing students, and students with K-12 teaching field assignments.

The round will also include random, required testing for a sample of students, faculty, and staff known to be participating in on-campus activities this semester.

"The screening strategy developed based on the recommendations of the Scientific Advisory Board has work as intended," said University of Maine President Joan Ferrini-Mundy, chair of the UMS Scientific Advisory Board. "Arrival screening and several rounds of surveillance testing helped us successfully identify and isolate infection so we could stay together safely this fall."

"We will be testing 8,000 community members in our final round of testing to respond to the growing threat of community transmission and to be sure our students can safely return home to their families for Thanksgiving," continued Ferrini-Mundy.

###

