
Moving to a campus masking requirement

1 message

Maud S. Mandel <m8@williams.edu>
Reply-To: m8@williams.edu
To: WILLIAMS-ALL@listserv.williams.edu

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Williams students, faculty and staff,

As I explained in [my message last week](#), I have been closely watching the Covid numbers in our state and region. Soon after I sent that email the CDC moved Berkshire County into their "Substantial Risk" and then most recently "High Risk" category for Covid transmission. The CDC [recommends](#) that vaccinated people in communities at these risk levels wear masks when indoors to protect others.

With this news in mind, I have decided with Senior Staff to institute a campus masking requirement. Starting tomorrow, Wednesday, August 11, students, faculty and staff will be required to wear masks in all administrative and academic buildings, including in classrooms, until further notice. To allow some flexibility for classes, we will set up a number of outdoor teaching tents. Faculty, to reserve one please [contact Dean of Faculty Safa Zaki](#).

Masks will not be required in enclosed private offices or outdoor spaces. In keeping with [CDC recommendations](#), however, people who are not fully vaccinated should mask outdoors when in a crowd or other setting where social distancing is not possible.

Staff, as a reminder, those of you still working remotely, please plan [to return to campus](#) by August 31. Our masking and other safety measures, informed by public health data, have been designed with this scenario in mind.

In order to allow a sense of community and personal space, and given that over 95 percent of our entire student body has been vaccinated, students may for now continue to go unmasked in residence halls and while eating in the dining halls. Staff are required to wear masks while working in these spaces.

Students, please be aware that we are allowing this during a time when fewer than 100 of you are living in the residence halls. Our rules could and may need to change as additional people return, or as the pandemic evolves.

Meanwhile, we also believe it is safe for now to allow carefully limited visitor access to campus. The Williams College Museum of Art has recently reopened, and the Office of Admission has begun offering outdoor-only campus tours, as announced in today's Daily Messages. The libraries intend to start allowing visitors later this month, and guests will be allowed into residence halls to help students during move-in (although not thereafter).

All visitors will be expected to mask while indoors, regardless of vaccination status. We recently added a "[Visiting campus](#)" page to the Covid website to make it easy to keep track of this information.

Given that exercise in indoor spaces entails increased risk, we are not reopening the fitness center, gym, and pool to visitors yet. We intend to do so once the risk subsides.

This message describes a stricter plan than the one set out in last week's email. The rapid switch illustrates how quickly things are evolving—and may yet change again. While I certainly hope and believe that the new measures will help us minimize risk, I am prepared to introduce additional rules if needed to protect public health.

Conversely, if county transmission rates go down we may eventually be able to relax our requirements. We will let everyone know if Williams reaches that point. For the time being, however, masking, vaccination and other safety measures will help us safely do this fall what we came to Williams to do: live, learn and work together in community.

I realize that required masking has an impact on that experience, so I appreciate your patience and good citizenship while we navigate the continuing pandemic.

Maud