



TO: University of Idaho Students, Faculty and Staff
FROM: Scott Green, President
Torrey Lawrence, Provost and Executive Vice President
DATE: Jan. 10, 2022
SUBJECT: Relying on Proven Safety Protocols for Omicron

A warm welcome to the spring semester. We trust everyone had an enjoyable and restful break.

After a meeting with our local and regional health professionals last week, we begin spring semester with the same safety protocols that were in place in the fall. These will be reviewed again in early February. Idaho Public Health and Gritman Medical Center report confirmed cases of COVID-19 are steadily rising, along with an increase in hospital admissions. At the same time, area health care facilities are experiencing staffing shortages because of winter weather, the nationwide shortage of workers and seasonal illnesses. The Omicron variant of COVID-19 has been reported in Latah County and is expected to significantly impact our community. Nationwide it is proving to be more highly transmissible than past variants.

While all this may seem like grim news, we have a proven track record of protecting ourselves, each other and our community. Our local health officials tell us that not one case has been traced back to our classrooms, and this lack of transmission demonstrates the effectiveness of masking. They have told us that the same protocols we have in place will also help protect our classrooms, offices and labs from the Omicron variant.

Masks are required in all university buildings on the Moscow campus. While we all may feel frustrated this virus has not run its course, we are grateful to have had excellent compliance in our classrooms and ask our students and faculty to continue to

maintain our high standards. Faculty are empowered to direct anyone to leave their classroom if not masked properly. Masking works, especially when both parties are masked. If you are at elevated risk, consider purchasing a KN95 mask or three- or four-ply surgical facial coverings, which all offer more protection than their cloth counterparts. A snug and tight fit is also key. Learn more about improving mask effectiveness on the [CDC webpage](#). Statewide masking protocols are under the direction of the local executive officer or site manager. Please continue to follow your local guidance.

Vaccination remains the best way to protect yourself against contracting, spreading and becoming seriously ill from COVID-19. Vaccine clinics on the Moscow campus begin Thursday, Jan. 13, and are listed on the Vandal Health Clinic's [COVID-19 webpage](#). Vaccines are also available statewide at a variety of locations. We will continue to offer vaccine incentives to our students and will communicate those details soon.

A limited supply of Vault tests are available on the Moscow campus and at each educational center for symptomatic individuals and we are working diligently to procure more. In Moscow, the tests are available with a VandalCard from noon to 2 p.m. weekdays at the Student Recreation Center, east entrance. Contact your center executive office for pick-up information in Boise, Idaho Falls and Coeur d'Alene.

As Vandals, we all do our best to look out for the Vandal Family. Simple actions, like acknowledging and following the [Healthy Vandal Pledge](#), go a long way in reducing the impact of COVID-19.

Our scrupulous protocols are in place to keep our campus safe and open for classes and activities this spring. The tenacity of our students, faculty and staff is keeping our campus open for the highest quality live instruction and educational experiences for which we are known. We need your help to continue to hold the line.

Keep Calm and Vandal On.

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