

# Nevada System of Higher Education

## Melody Rose Ph.D., Chancellor

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Aug. 18, 2021

Dear friends and colleagues,

We hope this message finds you and your family and friends safe and healthy.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic first began and the Nevada System of Higher Education and its institutions switched to remote learning in March 2020, there have been many questions regarding a return to in-person education.

With the start of the fall semester quickly nearing, we continue to make all the preparations necessary to ensure a safe return to our campuses for the vast majority of the more than 100,000 students who attend NSHE institutions. We believe the pandemic has underscored the importance of delivering a safe and effective in-person educational experience for our students, with their success being the guiding star of everything we do.

We also appreciate and understand the concerns of faculty, staff, students, parents, and the higher education community, regarding the recent surge of COVID-19 cases in Nevada.

Over the past few weeks there have been many changes and updates to how our campuses will approach the beginning of this semester.

**Firstly**, there is a [renewed mandate for everyone, regardless of their vaccination status, to wear a mask](#) inside any NSHE building, unless someone is in an individual office or a student is in their individual residence hall room. Unless there is a significant increase in vaccination rates and the level of COVID-19 transmissions decreases in Nevada's high-risk counties, we expect this mask mandate to remain in effect throughout the fall semester and possibly beyond.

Also, all students, employees, and members of the public, who are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19, are still required to wear face coverings outdoors while on campus.

**Secondly**, in accordance with State of Nevada COVID-19 policies, all NSHE employees who are not fully vaccinated will be required to take weekly COVID-19 tests and provide proof of testing and results. We have provided updates to the Governor's Office on our timeline for this policy implementation, which will take effect for NSHE employees on Aug. 30.

Also, we want to thank Governor Sisolak and Nevada's medical and health experts for their [direction in safely hosting large gatherings](#). Whether in a classroom or at a NSHE institution athletic event, our goal is to create a safe collegiate environment for Nevada's higher education community.

**Thirdly**, Nevada's [State Board of Health will review and issue guidance](#) on whether to require a COVID-19 vaccine for Nevada's public higher education student population at their Aug. 20 emergency meeting.

We appreciate the State Board of Health reviewing this issue, as they are Nevada's medical and science

experts best suited to and who have [the legal authority to make this decision](#). NSHE has publicly shared recommendations made by the [NSHE COVID-19 Task Force supporting a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for all NSHE students](#).

We continue to encourage every NSHE student to get the vaccine as urgently as possible, not only for the health and wellbeing of yourself and your family, but also for your fellow students and professors.

The COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to be the surest, safest, and most effective way to end the pandemic, and to keep Nevada learning.

**Fourthly**, we recognize that the mental health needs of the higher education community have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. All NSHE campuses have mental health and wellness resources available. A link to those resources on your campus can be found here: <https://nshe.nevada.edu/more-about-our-system/nshe-institution-mental-health-and-wellness-resources/>.

The State of Nevada has also compiled a list of resources meant to help cope with and manage mental health challenges. You can find those resources here: <https://nvhealthresponse.nv.gov/health-programs/coping/>.

With this in mind, we all must remember to be compassionate and patient toward our students and colleagues and in essence, everyone.

**Finally**, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that the rising number of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in our country and state come from those who have not been vaccinated. And a significant proportion of individuals who remain unvaccinated are within the traditional college and university student age demographic.

As a result, each NSHE institution will work with their local medical leaders and health districts to regularly host free COVID-19 vaccination clinics on campus, as allowable throughout the fall semester.

Each campus has its own unique set of characteristics, and these guides won't necessarily fully encompass each institution plan to reopen this semester. Please visit your institution's website to learn more.

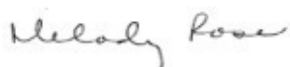
In the meantime, we want to assure you that we, along with our staff and members of our faculty, continue to actively communicate and partner with local, state, and federal officials on the latest COVID-19 information and mitigation efforts. The NSHE COVID-19 Task Force also remains thoroughly engaged on all matters relating to the pandemic and our state's response.

The health and wellbeing of Nevada's public higher education community and the safe return to in-person learning for NSHE's students, faculty, and staff continues to be our highest priority. We can achieve this if we all follow these guidelines as directed by our state's leading medical authorities and experts and remain committed to protecting ourselves and each other.

We look forward to seeing you all back on campus soon.

Get vaxxed. Wear masks. Be safe.

Sincerely,



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