



August 16, 2021

MCC Community:

As summer begins to wrap up, the new academic year is fast approaching with much excitement and anticipation. I look forward to seeing our campus community of Faculty, Staff, and Students coming back together in a few short weeks. With this in mind, I wanted to inform you about what our COVID Protocols and Guiding Principles will be for the beginning of the Fall Semester. As you know, the new Delta Variant, has resulted in a large uptick in infections throughout the United States. Just last week, our own Custer County has seen its first case of the Delta Variant. Our Executive Team is actively tracking and evaluating the situation on a daily basis.

On August 6th, OCHE Commissioner, Clayton Christian, sent out a COVID-19 Update to the Montana University System (MUS) stating that “OCHE is not supporting comprehensive mask requirements or vaccine mandates on our campuses....”. They are encouraging campuses “to develop strategies that reflect your local context and guidance from your local public health and local government authorities.” While MCC operates independently from the MUS, we do work in collaboration with them whenever appropriate.

With all of this in mind, the following will be MCC’s COVID Protocols and Guiding Principles for the beginning of Fall Semester:

- 1) **Face Coverings:** There will be no campus-wide mask mandate. However, the campus is encouraged to wear face coverings whenever there are group settings and social distancing is difficult to achieve. Individual Faculty and Staff may ask students and guests to wear masks in their classroom and offices if they choose. Faculty who are requiring masks in their classrooms will clearly identify this expectation in their syllabus in an area identified as “COVID-19 Class Protocol”. This will allow students the opportunity to consider another section of the class if available that does not have the requirement. Additionally, because many of our offices are small, Faculty or Staff who are uncomfortable meeting with students or guests in their offices will be given the opportunity to use other larger rooms on campus to conduct these meetings.
- 2) **Vaccinations:** There is not a COVID-19 vaccine requirement for employees, students, or guests. The community is encouraged to consult with their physician in understanding the benefits and challenges to getting the vaccination and make their own informed decision. The Administration will update the community on vaccination clinics or availabilities in the community.
- 3) **Social Distancing:** Social Distancing will be strongly encouraged. The Community should try and maintain a three (3) foot distance from others whenever possible. To help achieve this, we are attempting to maintain 50% seating in our classrooms, except in our labs where we will hold a capacity of 75%. There may be instances where a limited number of students may need to be added to an offering when an entire additional section is cost prohibitive. Additionally, some campus events may have larger capacity groups and it is recommended to consider social distancing and face covering protocols.

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- 4) **Cleaning Protocols:** Cleaning regiments from last academic year will remain in place. Faculty and Staff have access to cleaning caddies in the Facilities Maintenance Office but are expected to return them after finishing so others may have access to the materials. Faculty should consider allowing some time in each class to allow for cleaning desk areas before and after class. Hand hygiene is encouraged. The Community should utilize safe hand-washing practices and use hand sanitizer whenever possible. Hand sanitizer stations are located throughout all campus facilities.
- 5) **Symptomatic Self-Monitoring:** Students, faculty, and staff familiarity with the symptoms of COVID-19 is key to helping reduce the spread of the virus. MCC strongly encourages every member of the community and all visitors to check their temperature daily before coming to campus. Individuals who have a fever or exhibit symptoms should not come to work or class and should immediately contact their health provider and submit information on our “Report a Student of Concern” link found on our safety page, or direct communication from faculty and staff to our Human Resources Department.
- 6) **Communication Protocols.** We will follow the same COVID Response system of communication with updates and messaging coming to the campus from either myself or the Dean of Student Engagement and Auxiliary Services, Richard DeShields. If the Community has questions, pertaining to protocols, they should speak to their division lead or speak with Dean DeShields.
- 7) **Miscellaneous Protocols.** Plexiglass that was installed last year will remain in place. Additionally, food will continue to not be allowed in classroom settings without the student gaining a waiver. To be considered for this waiver, an individual would complete the form on the Dining page entitled “Food Waiver in the Classroom” at <https://www.milesc.edu/CampusServices/Dining/Dining.htm> . Once an individual is approved for the waiver, they would work with their individual faculty to gain permission to have food in the class. No waivers will be granted for lab science spaces.

We will continue to assess the national, regional, and local situation and work closely with our Public Health Officials in our campus response to this ongoing health situation. We appreciate your patience.

Thank you so much for all that you do. I am confident that working together we are going to have a great year. As always, if you have any comments, questions, or concerns about anything written here, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. My door is always open. I hope you enjoy the remaining days of summer. Looking forward to having our MCC Family back together again!

Go Pioneers!!

Ron Slinger
MCC President

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