Dear Twin Cities Students:

We are just weeks away from the start of fall classes, and we are excited to welcome you to a new year on campus. Gophers who are returning to live and learn on campus will notice many changes in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been hard at work to implement guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Health and the University’s own public health experts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on our campus. Before your first day, staff are implementing changes like enhanced cleaning and sanitizing practices throughout all University facilities, ensuring classrooms and other spaces allow for physical distancing, installing signage and additional hand sanitizer stations, and more.

Our goal is to do all we can to help keep one another safe and healthy by requiring face coverings in all indoor settings (with limited exceptions), along with physical distancing of at least six feet. We are emphasizing a shared commitment to good personal hygiene and health monitoring, avoiding groups, and staying home if you feel sick. It’s all included in our Fall 2020 page.

**Steps to take if you are sick or exposed**

Each of us is asked to [adhere to the steps to mitigate the spread of COVID-19](https://www.missouristate.edu/campus-public-health/). Due to the infectious nature of COVID-19, we are also preparing for cases occurring in our community. In that spirit, we are asking all students to closely monitor their potential exposure to COVID-19 in the 14 days prior to arrival on campus. We also ask that students avoid group gatherings where physical distancing cannot be maintained during this time.

Before arriving on campus, we ask that you and your family understand the steps you should take if you are exposed— defined as being within six feet of someone who has COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes—or if you test positive for COVID-19. If students do not comply with these safety measures, along with isolation and quarantine processes, disciplinary action may result. Please note this guidance varies based on whether you plan to live on campus (in one of the nine residence halls and four apartment buildings managed by Housing & Residential Life), or in housing located off campus.

Additionally, President Gabel announced the University’s testing protocol, [MTest](https://www.universityofminnesota.edu/campus-public-health/mttest). This resource provides guidance about quarantining, isolation, and health care support for those who are ill.

**Plan for the semester ahead**

As you are making plans to pack the typical items for campus life, this semester we ask that you take extra steps to consider COVID-19 in your planning. Your plan should include:

- Items to keep yourself and others healthy, including a digital thermometer, cleaning supplies to wipe down laptops, phones, and other high-touch surfaces, over-the-counter medications such as a cough suppressant and ibuprofen, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, tissues, and multiple face coverings. Two cloth face masks will be supplied to you by the University.
- [Creating a contingency plan](https://www.universityofminnesota.edu/campus-public-health/contingency-planning) with your family and/or roommates ahead of time. Know where you will go should you need to quarantine or isolate. That may include using the University-provided isolation or quarantine space for
residents with a housing contract (as directed), choosing to return to your family home, or moving elsewhere off campus.

- Establishment of mutually agreed upon expectations with roommates and housemates about actions you will take to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- Easily available information about your health care benefit plan, coverage, and providers.
- Contact information for your trusted health care provider or the Boynton Nurse Line (612-625-3222) for guidance if you feel sick or may have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Contact information for all of your instructors so you can arrange accommodations if the need arises (Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences). If you don’t have contact information, you can visit their faculty page or search through U of M People Search.
- If employed, a plan for how you will notify your employer and an understanding of whether or not sick leave benefits will be available to you. Students employed by the University of Minnesota Twin Cities are eligible for sick leave benefits if diagnosed with COVID-19.

Further guidance for developing a plan can be found on the MTest resource page and the Boynton Health website.

Let’s do all we can to support one another during the upcoming semester. Practice patience, understanding, and preventative measures.

Sincerely,

Jakub Tolar, M.D., Ph.D.
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Maggie Towle
Interim Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Dean of Students
University of Minnesota Twin Cities

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