



March 3, 2022

Dear Lumberjacks,

As you know, last week, the **CDC issued new guidelines for managing COVID-19**. At NAU, we have monitored these developments closely, remaining committed, as we have throughout the pandemic, to following the latest science and public health guidance. Together, we are united in our work every day to secure the conditions for an exceptional learning environment and healthy community that allow us to deliver the NAU mission.

After careful consideration of this guidance, assessment of local and regional conditions, and consultation with our Public Health and Steering Committees, we announce the following substantive updates to our COVID-19 management protocols at NAU.

**Per current CDC guidance, effective Monday, March 7, masks will be optional in Flagstaff and at statewide sites operating in a Low or Medium Community Level**, with the following exceptions, where masks continue to be required:

- NAU buses
- Campus Health Services and other clinical/health care settings
- Fieldhouse testing and vaccination site

We remain committed to providing a safe and vibrant learning environment. As we have done since day one, we will continue to consult with our Public Health and Steering Committees, follow CDC guidance, and monitor community levels. While I do not expect unanimous support for our decisions, I hope the reasoning and processes used to arrive at them are widely understood—as they speak to our efforts to build trust through transparency.

Based on these updated protocols, people may choose to mask at any time to their comfort level, and people with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. For individuals who are immunocompromised, the **CDC offers guidance** on how to protect yourself. NAU will work closely with individuals who need accommodations due to personal health concerns. **I know our Lumberjacks will be respectful and supportive of each other as individuals make masking choices that fit their comfort and needs in this changing environment.**

This is an important milestone in the pandemic as we look ahead to the bright future that more closely resembles the lives we lived before COVID. As we make

this transition in our protocols, the following guidance remains important for all within our community to mitigate risks:

- If you are sick, stay home.
- Make informed personal decisions on how to protect yourself, including using an N95 respirator mask (available at NAU and through the federal government), following guidance from the CDC.
- Get vaccinated and get boosted—this remains our best strategy to mitigate the virus.
- Use testing resources that are available at NAU and via at-home test options.

I encourage all within our community to support one another through our community of care, make informed choices, and embrace the optimistic and vibrant opportunities before us.

### **Summary of Public Health Advisory and AY21-22 Steering Committee recommendations**

Our plans for the week of March 7 are based on the information below and will continue to be evaluated and updated on a weekly basis.

- NAU's **Public Health Advisory Committee** met on Wednesday to review NAU's latest COVID-19 data and operational updates; the represented groups also shared specialized information from their fields and considered the updated guidance from the CDC and various local agencies. Based on this information, the group recommended adoption of CDC guidelines for NAU sites in Low or Medium Community Level and corresponding education and support for community members based on their individual preferences and risk levels.
- NAU's **AY21-22 Steering Committee** met on Thursday to review the information from the Public Health Advisory Committee. Based on the information, the group supported the updated guidance, reinforcing the need for our community to respect individual choice and educate and support all in this new phase of COVID response.

### **COVID-19 data**

The following data informed the deliberations described above.

- **COVID-19 cases:** The number of **Arizonans testing positive for COVID-19** has continued to decline.
- **Isolation and quarantine:** As of today, NAU is managing 13 COVID-19 cases among students on- and off-campus on the Flagstaff Mountain Campus, representing .001% of the total Flagstaff Mountain Campus student enrollment. This number is down from last week.
- **Testing results at the Flagstaff Mountain Campus:** For the week ending February 19, testing at the Fieldhouse, Campus Health Services, and self-reported COVID positives yielded the following results:
  - 1,042 tests—down from the previous week's total of 1,387
    - 738 tests by NAU students, faculty, and staff
    - 304 tests by non-NAU community members
  - 40 positives (3.8%)—down from the previous week's total of 81

- 20 positives (2.7%) among NAU students, faculty, and staff
- 20 positives (6.6%) among non-NAU community members
- **Ongoing mitigation testing:** Today, 2,500 members of the NAU community were called for mitigation testing to be completed next week.
- **Masks:**
  - N95 masks from the federal government are being distributed in Coconino County. Please fill out **the form on the North Country Healthcare website** to request an N95 mask.
  - In addition, NAU has N95 masks available for students and employees:
    - Students: info desks in the Union and DuBois Center (NOTE: even students who have already received one can pick up additional N95 masks at these locations)
    - Employees: via Campus Supply at **NAU-CampusSupply@nau.edu**
- **Vaccines:**
  - **Vaccines are a proven and effective means of reducing the risk of infection and lowering the risk of adverse health effects.** More information about vaccines and their benefits can be found on the **CDC website**. Visit the following links for information on where you can be vaccinated:
    - **NAU Fieldhouse and Campus Health Services**
    - **Coconino County**
    - **Arizona Department of Health Services**
- **Testing:**
  - NAU strongly encourages individuals randomly selected for mitigation testing or who have been exposed to COVID-19 to be tested at any of the sites identified through the following links:
    - **NAU Fieldhouse and Campus Health Services**
    - **Coconino County**
    - **Arizona Department of Health Services**

Sincerely,



José Luis Cruz Rivera  
President



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