



# THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

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## Memorandum

Date: February 25, 2022

To: UNC System Chancellors

From: Peter Hans

Re: UNC Institution Face Covering Protocols

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Throughout the pandemic, we have followed guidance from federal, state, and local public health officials. Their guidance, and our campus COVID-19 mitigation measures, have evolved as the nature of the pandemic itself has evolved. Fortunately, with the continuing decline in COVID trends and increasing vaccination rates, we are able take another step toward normalcy.

Guidance on face coverings has evolved rapidly over the past few weeks. The CDC is expected to issue updated recommendations later today easing mask guidelines. And, as you know, Governor Cooper [announced](#) last week that he is encouraging schools and local governments to end their mask mandates. Following the Governor's announcement, the NC Department of Health and Human Services issued updated [guidance](#) that K-12 schools move to voluntary masking. In response to the Governor's announcement, local governments and school boards across our state have begun taking actions to lift mask mandates. The time has come for UNC campuses to do the same.

As I have said before, each Chancellor has the authority to modify and tailor COVID-19 mitigation measures at your campus. I now ask that you exercise this authority by instituting mask-optional protocols in all campus indoor settings, including classrooms, no later than March 7. March 7 is the effective date of the NC DHHS updated K-12 guidance and also marks the beginning of spring break at many of our campuses, thus allowing time to make the transition to a voluntary masking approach. Of course, PPE requirements still must be followed where required by state or federal law and regulations, such as in clinical and health care settings, research laboratories, and on public transportation. To the extent county or municipal requirements are still in effect pursuant to local emergency declarations, these local requirements must be followed.

In making the transition to these new protocols, I expect all campuses to continue providing your students with the in-person classroom instruction they expect and deserve, consistent with your current course modality plans and campus policies.

As we all learn to live with COVID-19, current conditions allow us more opportunity to take personal responsibility for making decisions about our own health. In doing so, we should recognize that everyone's sense of personal risk moves at a different pace. Let's be patient with one another and show respect for our colleagues and students. Any individual who wishes to continue to wear a face covering is encouraged to do so, especially those who are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19.

Finally, I appreciate your ongoing efforts to offer vaccinations and booster shots to your campus communities. To date, our campuses have administered almost 131,000 doses. My thanks for continuing to encourage all faculty, staff, and students to get vaccinated and boosted when eligible.

Thank you for your leadership.

cc: Chiefs of Staff  
Chief Academic Officers