

## **Subject: Slippery Rock University to Require Face Coverings In All Buildings**

Aug. 12, 2021

To the University Community:

I'm sure everyone reading this email is looking forward to being back on campus in the coming days, seeing old friends – while making new ones – and returning to traditional classroom settings and extracurricular activities.

**With that in mind, I want to assure everyone that SRU is fully prepared to safely host in-person classes this fall.**

In order to assure a smooth transition back to campus and minimize health risks to our surrounding community due to COVID-19, our staff will continually monitor our community's status as it pertains to the pandemic and update our practices accordingly.

In particular, they will focus on our campus vaccination rate, campus infection rate, and surrounding community statistics in order to determine our response. As these statistics change, responses and certain mitigation initiatives are subject to change.

[According to the CDC, Butler and Allegheny counties are now both considered to be areas of "substantial transmission" in terms of spreading the COVID-19 virus.](#) Because face masks reduce the spread of the virus, **I have made the decision to return to our previous practice of requiring face coverings for all students, staff, faculty and visitors – regardless of vaccination status – inside all University buildings, effective Monday, Aug. 16.** This requirement also pertains to all riders of the Happy Bus.

Exceptions to this requirement include:

- Students in their residence hall rooms.
- Persons working alone in an enclosed space such as a private office or lab.
- Persons unable to wear a mask or facial covering due to an underlying medical condition.
- Persons actively eating or drinking in a dining hall or restaurant.

Students requiring an accommodation from wearing a face covering due to a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services at 724.738.4877. Faculty or staff seeking an accommodation should contact the Human Resources Office at 724.738.2016.

SRU prides itself on being a community comprised of caring people. My expectation is that compliance with this effort, or any other that seeks to keep everyone safe and healthy, will be met with understanding and dedication.

Right now, the single greatest determinant of risk from COVID-19 is an individual's vaccination status. Vaccinated people are highly unlikely to develop symptoms that will lead to hospitalization or death. These statistics are also true for the highly contagious Delta variant, which is nearly twice as contagious as previous variants. The Delta variant is also more likely than previous variants to strike younger, college-aged people. That risk increases as we gather together in large groups.

**The best way to remain in good health is to get vaccinated.** As your president, I currently cannot require our students and employees to get vaccinated, but I can certainly urge everyone to get a vaccine. It protects you, your friends and family, as well as our campus and surrounding communities. If you are not vaccinated, please [take the time to learn about the vaccine's benefits from reliable sources, such as the CDC](#). Scientific data have shown that the vaccines are safe and effective in preventing serious illness, hospitalization and death from COVID-19.

To help make it as easy as possible for members of our campus community – students, faculty and staff – to get vaccinated, **the University is hosting free COVID-19 vaccination clinics, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Aug. 19 and 22, at the Mass Testing Center in the University Union, 103 Central Loop.** People do not have to register in advance and staff will be available to assist in filling out the necessary paperwork and scheduling a second shot if an attendee is not receiving the J&J single-shot vaccine. Those needing a second shot will be able to receive that shot at a third clinic at SRU, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sept. 17, or at the Giant Eagle Pharmacy in Slippery Rock. For more information, contact SRU's Mass Testing Center at 724.738.2003 or email [covidtesting@sru.edu](mailto:covidtesting@sru.edu).

Additionally, we are currently collecting student and employee vaccination data. Please share your information so that we have an accurate count. [Staff may do so by clicking this link](#) while students can refer to an email they received July 30 with the subject line “SRU Reminds You to Upload Your Proof of Vaccination” for directions on how to upload their proof of vaccination.

We need good data in order to make informed decisions. In the absence of data, we must assume people are unvaccinated. Right now, because we lack good vaccination data and have no reliable campus infection data because students are away, we must act using the only data we have: community infection data.

We have been preparing, and will continue to prepare, for what we expect to be a rich and engaging in-person fall semester with the goal of making sure everyone in our campus community stays safe and healthy in order to experience life at The Rock. **Again, please do your part and get vaccinated.**

Sincerely,

William J. Behre  
President