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## Colleges amend reopening plans to include indoor masking

By Bobbie Hayse Messenger-Inquirer  
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Tim Caboni

Several colleges in the area announced Thursday they would be amending their fall semester plans to make masking indoors a requirement.

Western Kentucky University President Timothy C. Caboni issued a statement on Wednesday saying that, as the pandemic evolves, the university's coronavirus task force, in coordination with public health officials, continues to work to protect its campus community. That task force is expected to release additional guidance for the fall semester in the upcoming days.

"In advance of those guidelines being released, the Task Force has updated its masking guidance for campus to reflect changes in recommendations from our health partners and regional data," Caboni wrote. "Beginning Monday, August 9, everyone on WKU's campuses will be expected to wear a mask indoors. I know this will come as a disappointment to some but will allow us to continue with a normal semester in light of the spread of the delta variant in our communities. The Task Force will continue to monitor appropriate variables and to determine when masking will again become optional for vaccinated individuals."

He also said vaccines remain one of the strongest deterrents to COVID-19, and those who are not yet vaccinated can do so by scheduling an appointment with WKU Health Services at 270-745-2272.

Owensboro Community & Technical College announced on Thursday that masks will be required indoors beginning Friday, August 6.

In an email to staff members, OCTC President Scott Williams said the risk of infection with the delta variant of COVID-19 "is very high in our 4-county region and we must take steps to protect our campus community."

"Face masks are highly effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19," he said. "Given the high level of community spread of the delta variant and the relatively low level of fully vaccinated individuals in our region, we are going to require masks indoors in public areas on all our campuses for all persons, vaccinated and unvaccinated."



Scott Williams



The Rev. Larry Hostetter

He also encouraged appropriate physical distancing and proper hygiene, and for those who are sick to stay home.

The Rev. Larry Hostetter, Brescia University's president, also issued a statement Thursday stating the school would be joining other higher education institutions and the Diocese of Owensboro to implement an indoor mask policy, regardless of vaccination status.

"We appreciate all those in our community who have received the vaccine and want to continue to be part of the solution to restore our campus to its full functionality," Hostetter said. "Throughout the pandemic, we have based our actions on information from the CDC and our local health department with the safety of our students and employees while minimizing the disruption to the educational experience at the forefront of each decision-making process."

He said masking indoors, at this time, provides the "best opportunity for a consistent, in-person experience this fall for our students."

Brescia will be hosting Owensboro Health Regional Hospital to provide a vaccination clinic on campus from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Aug. 19, and all students and employees who are not yet vaccinated may do so at that time.

Officials from Kentucky Wesleyan College said there would be no changes to their fall semester plans, as of Thursday evening.

The college previously announced that students have to show a negative COVID-19 test or a vaccination card to be allowed on campus. KWC is also offering a \$250 incentive to all students who show their vaccination card, and there will also be vaccination clinics available for students and staff.

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