Welcome back students, faculty and staff!

We hope this letter finds you well, and excited to begin a new school year!

Minnesota colleges and universities have worked hard to create an environment that will allow students to learn this fall and connect with each other. In anticipation of any questions you may have before arriving on campus, the Minnesota Department of Health along with our Southwest Minnesota State University team wanted to provide you with some information around expectations of students this fall.

These expectations will help reduce the amount of transmission of COVID-19 on campus, including yourself, others around you, and those who are at high risk and vulnerable to COVID-19. These behaviors will be important for the success and safety of all campus members during the school year.

Expectations for Behavior at School

Socializing on and off campus, whether indoors or outdoors
- Keep group sizes small (10 or fewer people) – the smaller the better!
- Ensure at least 6-foot social distancing between you and your friends.
- Meet outside if you can – it is less risky than meeting inside.
- Limit the number of people in small or common spaces.
- Avoid crowded bars and restaurants or other gathering spots.
- If you do go to a bar or restaurant:
  - Don't stay if tables aren't spread out. Clustering/crowding spreads COVID-19 fast.
  - Sit outside. We see less transmission of COVID-19 when people are outside.
  - Sit at a table with space between you and others rather than stand at a bar. It is too easy to get close to each other when you are standing.
  - When sitting with your friends, try to give yourself as much space as possible.
  - Wear a face covering when you are not eating or drinking.

Distancing while you are on campus
- Follow the guidance of social distancing and expectations of your college/university.
- Avoid congregating in groups in social settings such as bars or house parties.
- Socially distance 6 feet at all times, even when wearing a mask.

Pay attention to your health
- Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19, you can find what symptoms to look for here: How To Protect Yourself And Others
- https://www.smsu.edu/resources/webspaces/mustangsreturn/smsu_fall2020_student_protectyourselfinfo_072720.pdf
- Stay home if you are sick or have symptoms, call your health care provider, and get tested!

Answer the call
- If your health department calls you, answer, or if you miss the call, call them back. It could be a case investigator or a contact tracer with important questions and information to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in your community and on our campus.

Telephone (507) 537-7678 • Toll-Free (800) 642-0684
1501 State Street, Marshall MN 56258-1598 • www.SMSU.edu
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- Discussions with health department staff and/or designated campus staff are confidential. This means that your personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your health care provider.
- Your name will not be shared with those you came in contact with, unless you have given permission.
- See Contact Tracing Slows the Spread of COVID-19 (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/images/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-slows-spread-1200x675.jpg)

Follow isolation and quarantine recommendations
- If you become sick with COVID-19 you will need to isolate and stay away from others.
  - See What to Do if You Have COVID-19 (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/case.pdf)
- If you are in quarantine, you will also need to stay away from others. This may also be a time where you decide to return home.
  - See What to Do if You Have Had Close Contact With a Person With COVID-19 (https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/contact.pdf)
- Some campuses will have a place for you to go, but some will encourage you to go back home. However, it is important to determine if you have anyone at home that would be at high-risk of severe illness.
  - See People Who are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-increased-risk.html).

Wash your hands
Wash your hands often, with soap and water. Wash for at least 20 seconds.
- Always wash your hands after being in a public place.
- Always wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue, throw used tissues in the trash, then wash your hands.

Cleaning
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects or surfaces such as phones, computers, remote controls, keys and doorknobs.
- Clean reusable/cloth masks after each use. Masks can be washed by hand or with laundry.
- Do not share your phones.

Masks and face coverings
Face coverings, often called masks, can help stop your germs from infecting others. Research has shown that wearing masks reduces the risk of infection, especially when combined with other prevention efforts such as washing your hands often and staying 6 feet away from others.
As of July 25, 2020, per the Governor's Executive Order, people in Minnesota will be required to wear a face covering in all indoor businesses and public indoor spaces, unless you are alone. Your college or university may have additional requirements while you are on campus.

Did you know? Smoking and vaping can put you at higher risk
- If you smoke, use e-cigarettes or vape that can put you at a higher risk of adverse reactions with COVID-19.
- Free smoking cessation options are available or learn more at: https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/tobacco/quitting/index.html#covid19

Speak Up!

In addition, speak up in a kind way and remind your peers, or even staff or faculty, when you observe anyone not following these very important safety expectations. It really is up to you as the student to make this a successful fall!

Stay Informed

As information and expectations continue to change with the COVID-19 pandemic, stay informed of our campus situation. Be sure to check your SMSU emails regularly and follow the Mustangs Return link on the SMSU website

- https://www.smsu.edu/mustangsreturn