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PRESS RELEASE

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[TO RSVP FOR MEDIA AVAILABILITY FROM 12:30-1:30 TODAY, reporters can click here or email endi.hartigan@state.or.us. Members of the media will be given access to a video meeting with Ben Cannon, Executive Director of the HECC, and Thomas Jeanne, MD, MPH, Deputy State Epidemiologist, OHA.](#)

PRESS RELEASE AND MEDIA AVAILABILITY: New Public Health Guidelines for Resuming In-Person Higher Education Activities

Salem, OR | The Higher Education Coordinating Commission, in partnership with the [Oregon Health Authority](#) (OHA), is pleased to report new state public health standards for the resumption of in-person higher education activities across Oregon colleges and universities during the pandemic. Leaders from the HECC and OHA will be available for media questions on these guidelines via a video meeting to be held from 12:30-1:30PM today.

At the direction of Governor Brown, effective June 14, 2020, in-person instruction, research, and residential activities at Oregon colleges and universities can resume, but only if institutions meet minimum COVID-19 public health standards adopted by the Oregon Health Authority. An executive order applying to all degree-granting public and private colleges and universities in Oregon is forthcoming, and will be posted to [coronavirus.oregon.gov](#). In conjunction with this directive, the OHA and HECC today released new [Public Health Guidelines for the Conduct of In-person Instructional, Residential, and Research Activities at Oregon Colleges and Universities](#). The Governor's forthcoming executive order will replace the previous executive orders pertaining to higher education (20-17 and 20-09) that are effective through June 13, 2020. **Each college and university will have the flexibility to determine how and when students return to campus, but must meet, at a minimum, the public health requirements contained in the guidance.**

“When colleges and universities begin classes this fall, life will be different for students, faculty, and staff. It is important that we ensure their health and safety, and the safety of their communities,” said Governor Brown. “Each

institution, each campus, and each building is different, and it's critical that the implementation of this public health guidance be informed by direct community feedback. But with safeguards in place, Oregon's great colleges and universities can return to fulfilling their missions in pursuit of learning, research, and achievement.”

The new guidelines first establish key principles for colleges and universities to reduce potential exposures to the coronavirus. These include physical distancing, hand hygiene, cohorts, use of personal protective equipment, environmental cleaning and disinfection, isolation of people who are sick and quarantine of people who have been exposed. College and university determinations about the resumption of on-site operations must be informed by local circumstances and regional readiness, in consultation with their [Local Public Health Authority](#).

The guidelines also set **minimum public health requirements to be followed generally campus-wide** that include but are not limited to:

- Implementing measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 within buildings and the campus setting, such as appropriate cleaning and disinfecting procedures; screening, monitoring, and testing for illness among symptomatic students, staff, and faculty; and use of face coverings.
- Permitting remote instruction/telework or other reasonable accommodations for students and employees who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Recommending the use of face coverings for all students, staff, and faculty, in accordance with local public health, OHA, and CDC guidelines.
- Requiring face coverings where physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Working with their local public health authority (LPHA) to ensure they are able to effectively respond to and control outbreaks through sharing of information when appropriate.

The guidelines additionally detail other specific requirements related to: entry and self-screening, instructional settings, isolation measures, health-related communication, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, facilities, faculty and staff, research settings, residential services settings, Communicable Disease Management Plans, and campus operational plans.

The forthcoming Executive Order and today's Public Health Guidelines also mandate compliance processes related to meeting minimum requirements. Each public university and community college must develop, in consultation with their local public health authority, a written campus operational plan describing how the institution will comply with the requirements to meet minimum standards. The institution's governing board must approve and regularly review this plan, which must also be submitted to the HECC. Each institution must designate an employee or officer to implement, and enforce, or supervise the implementation or enforcement of, these requirements. The guidance may be amended from time to time and the HECC has authority to provide further guidance as necessary.

Ben Cannon, Executive Director of the HECC, said, “I'm heartened by the collaborative process that resulted in these recommendations, and thankful to OHA and the Governor for establishing medically-informed baseline requirements for protecting the health of campus communities and the community at large, clear compliance requirements, and flexibility for institutions to respond to the needs of their campus community and the evolving status of the pandemic.”

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The State of Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) envisions a future in which all Oregonians—and especially those whom our systems have underserved and marginalized—benefit from the transformational power of high-quality postsecondary education and training. For more information, go to www.Oregon.gov/HigherEd