Dear Students in the College of Public Health—

Welcome to new academic year! We are excited to welcome those of you who are new to the ETSU College of Public Health, and to welcome back our returning students.

The past eighteen months have reinforced the essential role that public health and healthcare play in our National and global well-being. An education from the College of Public Health is as important now as it has ever been.

To assure that everyone has the greatest opportunity possible to complete their educational journey, the Leadership Council for the College of Public Health strongly recommends that you take the following steps:

1. Get a COVID-19 Vaccination. A COVID-19 vaccine is the best weapon we have of slowing down the spread of the virus, reducing serious COVID-19 disease, and preventing future viral mutations. Vaccines have been shown to be safe and very effective at preventing disease. Vaccinations are available at a variety of sites on campus: ETSUVaccineSites. For those of you off-campus, there is a vaccine finder website from the CDC: CDCVaccineFinder. In Tennessee, the law prohibits ETSU from mandating the COVID-19 vaccine at this time. However, it is the single most important thing you can do to prevent illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID.

2. Wear an appropriate face covering. Face coverings are required when on campus, with some specific exceptions: ETSUMaskPolicy. Given the current high rate of regional spread, we would strongly encourage you to wear your face covering when going into any public facility, even off campus.

3. If you are ill, or have symptoms of any respiratory disease (fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, etc.) we would encourage you to a) not come to school or work; b) inform your faculty member of the reason for your absence; c) notify your healthcare provider if your symptoms seem to be serious or worsening; and d) wear a face covering, even around members of your household. If you have tested positive, or think you may have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, please call (423) 439-7785.

4. Avoid large crowds. Avoid large crowds/indoor gatherings if most people are not wearing masks. This is especially important if you are not vaccinated.

5. Seek the truth. There are a tremendous number of people who are sharing their opinions about COVID-19, the vaccination, masks, and other topics. We strongly encourage you to get your information from trusted sites, including the Centers for
Disease Control and Prevention, the Tennessee Department of Health, the Food and Drug Administration and other comparable sources.

6. Speak the truth. As a student in the College of Public Health, people will turn to you for accurate and timely information about COVID-19. What you say matters! How you act matters! Please remember that you are a trusted voice—to your peers, to your family members, and in your communities.

7. Be willing to change your mind. COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving pandemic. Scientists are learning new information every day. As new advice comes out from trusted sources, please be willing to change what you say and/or how you are acting in public. Hopefully, new information will be more reassuring, and we can soon back away from some or all of the steps we are taking to protect ourselves and others. However, until that happens, it is important to follow new advice from the CDC, the TDH, the FDA or others.

There is a great deal of information about COVID-19 on the ETSU Bucs are Back website: ETSU Bucs are Back Please take a few moments to thoroughly review this information. There are also over 140 informative videos on the College of Public Health COVID-19 website, including the most recent weekly update: COPH COVID-19 Site Both of these sites are important opportunities to be sure that your information and perspective are up to date.

If you have any questions, uncertainties, or concerns about any of this information, please let us know.

Be safe and be healthy!

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