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UW MASK MANDATE REMOVAL IGNORES PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT SHARED GOVERNANCE

MADISON, WI — On Wednesday, the UW System and UW-Madison announced on-campus mask mandates would come to an end by spring break - a decision the Associated Students of Madison believes ignores students' opinions expressed through shared governance.

Earlier this week, all four student shared governance representatives on the COVID-19 Student Advisory Board voted to keep our campus mask mandate in place until the end of the spring semester. Additionally, past statements from ASM, the Teaching Assistants Association (TAA) and the UW BIPOC Coalition all called for the university to strengthen COVID-19 safety protocols. Dropping common-sense policies like the mask mandate does the exact opposite.

UW-Madison's decisions ought to be made based on credible infectious disease science. While COVID-19 cases are falling, Dane County still has "high" COVID-19 transmission rates according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Therefore, the CDC recommends "everyone in Dane County, Wisconsin should wear a mask in public, indoor settings."¹

Some students may be ready to ditch their uncomfortable masks regardless of CDC guidelines. However, campus policy decisions must also account for our most vulnerable students and staff. Many valued members of our campus community have health conditions preventing them from safely engaging with in-person academics, especially if masks are not present.

Ending UW-Madison's mask mandate contradicts our university's commitments to student well-being and shared governance. ASM asks that UW-Madison leaders engage in shared policy development initiatives with students to ensure proper protections for vulnerable students, staff, and faculty throughout the remainder of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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¹https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view?list_select_state=Wisconsin&data-type=Risk&list_select_county=55025