



## FROM THE PROVOST

August 20, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for all your efforts at the start of this challenging semester. I appreciate having had the opportunity to talk with faculty this week and to listen to their concerns and suggestions. Interim Senior Vice President for Health Affairs Stephens and I have been in continual communication to ensure the best possible coordination between the university's health and safety efforts and academics. A number of common themes emerged in conversations with faculty, and we want to provide some new guidance as we move into the second week of classes.

### Contact Tracing:

- The OSU Covid Response Team is in frequent communication with University Health Services (UHS). UHS and the county are providing public health support and guidance as best they can in the face of rising case numbers; however, due to the many moving parts associated with a college campus and the range of areas where students are, it is logistically challenging to consistently identify classroom exposures. As such, effective immediately, faculty have the opportunity to notify students when a positive case is confirmed in a specific class session, **although no name or identifiable information can be shared**. Additionally, the Instructor of Record has the opportunity to shift their class **temporarily** to a modality that best suits the class **for up to two class periods** to allow time for contact tracing to take place. We will continue to monitor this situation and will keep you advised of any change in this guidance.
  - Provided below, and attached, is a template for use when communicating with your students. Given an exposure in your classroom has occurred, please remind your students masks are strongly encouraged.
  - OSU has several platforms to use for live-streaming your class. Instructions for using Microsoft Teams or Conferences for Live Streaming can be found at <https://itl.okstate.edu/teach-online-video-conference.html>. Conferences (Big Blue Button) reverted back to the free version this summer and recordings cannot be downloaded. To record and download instructions, please use Microsoft Teams.
  - **The specific details of any temporary class accommodation will be determined in a meeting with the deans early next week.**

- Please be as flexible as possible with attendance requirements with those students who are following CDC guidance.

### **Modified Guidance for Office Hours and Advising Appointments:**

- Given the reluctance of some students to wear masks when meeting with faculty and advisors, Academic Affairs supports the personal preference of faculty and advisors to shift office and advising appointments to a virtual format effective immediately and through Friday, October 1.
  - With this shift to virtual appointments, it is very important for faculty and advisors to remain cognizant of the academic and mental health needs of their students as there will be instances when an in-person meeting is essential.
  - A modification of the previously shared statement regarding office and advising appointments is provided below. In the event a student requests an in-person appointment, faculty and advisors might consider relocating to a larger office or meeting space.

"Office hours and/or advising appointments through Friday, October 1 will be virtual; however, in-person appointments may be scheduled if essential. For in-person appointments, you are strongly encouraged to wear a mask, as social-distancing is not possible in my office. I will be wearing a mask."

- We will continue to monitor CDC, local, state and federal guidance to make a determination for office and advising appointments after October 1. It is important to remember that the opportunity to shift office and advising appointments online, if preferred, should not be interpreted as permission to return to remote work locations, unless an approved EO accommodation is in place.

### **Availability of Masks for Classroom and Laboratory Settings:**

- Faculty set aside time during initial class meetings this week to make personal pleas to students to respect our culture of caring by wearing masks while in class. While some students responded positively to the faculty member's request to put on (or keep on) a mask, a majority of students did not respond or did not have masks with them.
  - For convenience, I am again providing the statement vetted by OSU Legal Counsel and shared for use on course materials, in Canvas, and for class discussion.

"OSU encourages you to wear a mask indoors in public settings regardless of whether you are fully vaccinated, consistent with the current CDC recommendations. This is especially important in classrooms and laboratories because people are together for long periods of time. Wearing a mask during class not only protects you but also helps protect those around you who may be more vulnerable. This is a simple way we can look out for all members of the Cowboy family. If you feel sick, do not attend class. Contact University

Health Services at 405-744-7665 immediately and communicate with me as soon as possible about any work you miss.”

- Senior Vice President Weaver confirmed the University will again purchase a large quantity of masks for distribution to the campus. As soon as details of this initiative are available, they will be shared. Additionally, Vice President Hallenbeck shared a breakdown of masks (4,500) and individual hand sanitizers (4,975) distributed earlier this month to a representative in your respective college.
  - The leadership team in your college will determine a method to distribute these supplies to faculty, advisors, staff and others who have frequent contact with students and members of the public. Extra masks may also be provided to faculty to share with students in class who may not have a mask available for use.
  - If a unit has a supply of extra masks (cloth and/or disposal) within your college/department that are not being put to use, please consider reallocating the masks to Academic Affairs, 101 Whitehurst, and we will repurpose masks to faculty, students and others with an immediate need for use in classrooms, laboratories, and other public settings.

#### **Posting Approved Campus Signage Encouraging Masks While Indoors:**

- The **OSU News COVID-19** update distributed to all employees Wednesday afternoon, August 18, included a link to approved mask signage available to download, print and post in your areas. In case members of your team missed this graphic, the updated mask signage is available for download to print and post in your areas [here](#).
- Over the next week, arrangements will be made to post color prints of the [updated mask signage](#) on the door(s) of each general university classroom in your respective building(s) as a reminder to faculty and students that masks are strongly encouraged.

#### **Departmental/College Events:**

- If you, members of your administrative team and/or event planners are uncomfortable with holding college/departmental events under current OSU guidelines (encouraging but not requiring masks and social distancing), feel free to consider cancelling or postponing the events or moving them outside.
  - Wednesday’s **OSU News** also included suggested wording that could be included when sending out invitations to campus events. For reference, the statement is provided below:

Please remind invitees: “OSU encourages you to wear a mask indoors in public settings regardless of vaccination status, which is consistent with the current CDC recommendations. Wearing a mask protects you, and helps protect those around you who may be more vulnerable. This is a simple way we can look out for all members of the Cowboy family.”

Additional guidance will be shared as questions are received and after discussion with the OSU Covid Response Team. Please know we appreciate your continued support of your faculty, staff and students during this time of uncertainty.

Best,

*Jeanette*

Jeanette M. Mendez  
Interim Provost and Senior Vice President

Dear Students in **(insert course number/section):**

I have been notified that a student in our class has tested positive for Covid-19 after attending class on **(insert date)**. **[Optional: To give time for contact tracing, we will hold our next class(es) online on [date of next class(es)]. [Insert information about accessing the course here].]**

**People who are unvaccinated** are advised to quarantine for 10 days after your last contact if you have been in **close contact** (within 6 feet of someone for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period) with someone who has COVID-19. Your quarantine may be shortened to seven days if you have a negative test performed after your fifth day of quarantine and you have remained asymptomatic. Wear a mask in public through day 14 from your contact with the confirmed case.

**People who are fully vaccinated** do NOT need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 unless they have **symptoms**. However, fully vaccinated people should get tested 3-5 days after their exposure, even if they don't have symptoms and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative.

Here is information to **schedule a Covid test** at University Health Services. If you test off-campus and are positive, please **report your test** to University Health Services so OSU's Covid Care Team can provide resources during your quarantine.

In coordination with local and state health officials, if you test positive for COVID-19 you must self-monitor your health and self-quarantine for 10 days at home or another off-campus location and not return until your symptoms are gone and you are 24-hours fever-free without medication. Student quarantine housing is available.

If you are asked to self-isolate or self-quarantine you should stay home. Follow these guidelines for self-isolation: Report any symptoms of COVID-19 immediately to **University Health Services**, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you have a health emergency, please go to the nearest emergency room.

If you are uncertain about whether you should quarantine, see the latest **quarantine guidelines from the CDC**.

**For my course**, if you need to quarantine, please stay caught up in the course to the best of your ability and let me know if we can answer any questions about course material. We know that these are challenging circumstances. Lectures will be recorded (or insert how you are making information/materials available to students who miss class for quarantine) so please keep an eye on the canvas course to stay updated on the material while you are out of class.

Take care,

Insert your signature line