



FROM THE PROVOST

September 3, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your continuing work to compassionately serve and assist our students. The OSU administration and members of the Pandemic Response Team interact daily to assess and respond to the latest data on what is happening on campus and in our community. Foremost in our minds is how we can provide guidance that will empower deans, members of their academic leadership teams, department/school heads, and faculty to provide the best possible educational experience for our students by utilizing temporary shifts in course delivery that help to ensure the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff. Please know all members of the OSU leadership recognize the challenges our faculty, staff, and students are facing, and we continue to devote our time and effort to listening and evaluating the best path forward.

As part of our work to facilitate effective communication, we are actively collaborating with the Faculty Council leadership to ensure timely input is received from a broad range of faculty. To aid in this effort, the Faculty Council is creating a detailed survey to collect pandemic-related viewpoints and experiences from our faculty. I encourage you to watch for this survey and to take the opportunity to provide thoughtful input and potential solutions for our consideration. Finally, the Faculty Council will soon form a working group with broad representation, composed mainly of faculty but also including graduate students, undergraduate students and staff. The input from this group will help guide the Pandemic Response Team as we move through the semester and look ahead to Spring 2022.

Because of instructors' efforts in reporting classroom exposures and positive cases that students report directly to instructors, we have been able to notify close contacts far faster than ever before. Timely contact tracing is a vital tool in slowing the spread of COVID-19, reducing the chances of further exposures, and ensuring students identified as close contacts know when they need to get tested. We greatly appreciate the role instructors are playing in this process and recognize it is an additional demand on their time.

Please find below additional guidance about on-going processes to help address some of the concerns being voiced by members of the Cowboy family.

Temporary Adjustment to Course Delivery:

As shared last week, Instructors of Record have been empowered to temporarily shift the delivery mode of classes for up to two (2) weeks following notification of a positive case in a class. Specifically, after thoughtfully considering the modality that best suits the needs of the class, an Instructor of Record will continue to have the following three (3) options to consider and implement for up to two (2) weeks following notification of a positive test in the class:

1. Move the course online.
2. Teach in a hybrid format (part online/part in class) to ensure social distancing and reduce further exposure. For students attending a face-to-face class, masks will be required for up to two (2) weeks.
3. Continue the course as face-to-face with masks required of all students attending for up to two (2) weeks.

Pandemic Response Team members, the deans, and I continue to evaluate the impact of these options and other approaches, and will provide further guidance once it becomes available. Additionally, your respective college leadership team is providing weekly aggregate data on temporary course modality changes to give us an idea of the breakdown of the different format choices instructors are making. One college suggested it would be helpful if instructors could report temporary course delivery method changes on the same form used for contact tracing in Slate. We are in the process of implementing this option, and any college that wishes to use it may do so.

Compliance with Mask Guidance in Classroom and Laboratory Settings:

It is important we all do our part to maintain a safe and healthy place to work and study. As such, the campus community must remain vigilant and comply with enhanced guidance stating it is expected masks will be worn indoors, in public on campus including classrooms, laboratories and all indoor meetings and gatherings.

- The Office of Student Support and Conduct has provided updated guidance on addressing students who are not meeting classroom expectations, and I strongly encourage you to review the attached document prior to your next class period.
- Should there be cases where a faculty member receives notification of a positive student case and UHS has advised the student to quarantine, yet they do not comply, this incident should be reported to the Office of Student Support and Conduct (student.support@okstate.edu, 405-744-5470) and will be addressed through the *Failure to Comply* policy in the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- If confirmation has not been received a student is positive but others suspect that is the case, it would be helpful for a faculty or staff member to contact the student to make them aware of services available on campus, encourage seeking medical advice, and ask them to follow the guidance provided. Sometimes just being contacted and expressing concern will change behavior.
- If students need health accommodations due to COVID-19 (beyond assistance in keeping up with coursework), please refer them to [Student Accessibility Services](#), (405) 744-7116.

- “Mask expected” [signage](#) has been posted in many campus buildings, and you may also find it helpful to use the [mask expectation slide](#) in classrooms, laboratories, and other gatherings.
- Facilities Management ordered and has delivered thousands of KN95 and N95 masks for distribution to faculty, staff, and students. Additional masks can be purchased as needed by individual units through the campus OK Corral system, and units will receive the same pricing negotiated for the large bulk purchase. Details for ordering are included in the second attachment to this message.

As we continue through the semester, please maintain an awareness of the health and wellbeing of those around you and continue to extend kindness and understanding to colleagues and students. I hope the Labor Day weekend provides you with opportunities to relax and focus on the many positive things happening in your personal and professional life.

Kindest regards,

Jeanette

Jeanette M. Mendez
Interim Provost and Senior Vice President