May 27, 2021

Update to Pandemic Related Teaching and Classroom Guidance

On May 19, 2021, pursuant to State of Texas and TTU System declarations, President Schovanec announced the immediate lifting of all COVID-19 campus protocols outlined in the Texas Tech Commitment. For example, wearing face coverings is optional, no longer a requirement on campus or in teaching spaces (except for passengers using public transportation such as Citibus). Accordingly, the Office of the Provost has updated pandemic-related guidance pertaining to in-person classroom instruction, as provided herein.

Much of the previous guidance available on Provost office webpages as “Academic Affairs Resources and Information for Covid-19 Response” is being deactivated and is superseded by this updated guidance. Building- and facilities-specific information may be stated elsewhere by the Operations Division or the respective college or school.

What is different about Summer and Fall 2021 compared to the 2020-21 academic year?
For Summer 2021, in-person and hybrid classes were planned for 50% capacity and generally retaining this protocol is advisable to avoid disruption to section scheduling and as we transition to mask-optional and more normal campus activity. However, if there are students needing into a course section whose enrollment increases the capacity beyond 50%, it is the instructor’s and unit’s option to permit those additions. For Fall 2021, as has been planned for course scheduling, anticipate 100% classroom capacities and normal functioning.

What do I need to communicate to students before the start of classes?
At least a couple of days before the start of classes, e-mail your students to highlight class expectations. Introduce yourself, be positive about the upcoming term and the content and objectives of your course, inform them of required textbooks or other course materials they need to acquire, and that you would like to outline a few expectations for everyone to have as they come to the first class period. Remind students that the COVID-19 protocols have been lifted and that face coverings are optional, but that it is highly recommended that those who have not been vaccinated for COVID-19 wear face coverings to help prevent the spread of the virus. It is also important to stress to students that CDC guidelines require riders of Citibus and other public transportation systems to wear face masks. Let students know that Texas Tech University Operations Division will continue to provide sanitization stations across campus along with enhanced facilities cleaning practices.
What about student appointments and meetings?
We can anticipate having in-person advising, office hours, and academic support interactions. Face masks will be optional but social distancing may be applicable where feasible and conducive to interaction. All student appointments and related academic correspondence should be documented by the faculty member, advisor, or other appropriate staff member in the student's educational record using strive.ttu.edu. All virtual interactions should only take place via TTU approved and supported online meeting technologies. Strive.ttu.edu training information can be accessed here.

What new information should I provide in my course syllabi?

**Face Covering Policy**: As of May 19, 2021, face coverings are now optional in TTU facilities and classrooms, and all other COVID-19 campus protocols have been lifted. It is highly recommended that those who have not been vaccinated for COVID-19 wear face coverings to help prevent the spread of the virus.

**Seating Charts and Social Distancing**: There is no longer a mandated social distancing protocol for classroom seating, but diligence is encouraged when indoors and not wearing masks. A seating chart might be used in the classroom to facilitate attendance, class interactions and other in-class engagement activities.

**Illness-related Absences**: [Instructors of Record may revert to their pre-pandemic absence policies regarding illnesses but take into consideration the variant effects of COVID-19 on people when students report absence due to the virus (e.g., some may need extended days of absences and time to make up missed work).]

**In-Person Office Hours**: [IoRs may provide their own statement here with provision that masks are optional but social distancing may be expected.]

**Personal Hygiene**: We all should continue to practice frequent hand washing, use hand sanitizers after touching high-touch points (e.g., door handles, shared keyboards, etc.), and cover faces when coughing or sneezing.

**Potential Changes**: The University will follow CDC, State, and TTU System guidelines in continuing to manage the campus implications of COVID-19. Any changes affecting class policies or delivery modality will be in accordance with those guidelines and announced as soon as possible.

Comments and questions about implementing and communicating protocols for “returning to normal” classroom instruction may be directed to Interim Vice Provosts Jaclyn Cañas-Carrell or Mitzi Lauderdale or Senior Vice Provost Rob Stewart.