

Interoffice Communication

Date: July 22, 2020

To: Iowa State University Faculty

From: Jonathan Wickert
Senior Vice President and Provost 

Subject: Face Coverings, Syllabus Language, and Class Attendance (SVPP COVID-19 Communication #15)

I am writing to share updates on the use of face coverings and managing that requirement, guidance on flexible class attendance policies, and a health syllabus statement for fall instruction.

Face covering requirement and community expectations

As President Wintersteen has communicated to the campus community, face coverings and/or face shields are now required in classrooms, offices, and other areas where physical distancing cannot be maintained. Consistent with that requirement, faculty and teaching assistants will be required to wear a face covering and/or face shield during in-person teaching. In addition to promoting safety and health, this action also models appropriate behavior for students to follow.

Similarly, students will be required to wear face coverings and/or face shields when they are in learning spaces. Many faculty have asked how the face covering requirement will be enforced for students. The Dean of Students Office, working with the Academic Continuity Workgroup, has developed a set of [community expectations](#) to maintain a safe environment for students, faculty, and staff. These include broadly communicating face covering and physical distancing requirements, and creating safe alternatives for students who may be unable to wear a face covering due to an underlying health condition or an approved accommodation.

If a student has been approved by Student Accessibility Services for a [COVID-19 related accommodation](#), faculty members will be notified. The student will be referred to an academic adviser, who may, for instance, facilitate the student being moved to an online section or to another course.

While the university's approach to promote healthy behavior by students and employees focuses on positive reinforcement and education about the science and efficacy of face coverings, there will be situations where individuals do not adhere to our requirements. In those situations, it is appropriate to remind the individual that a face covering and/or face shield must be worn—properly, covering the nose and mouth—prior to entering a classroom, studio, laboratory, office, or other learning space. In case of non-compliance, the initial actions should be:

- If the situation involves a faculty or staff member, contact your own supervisor to report the incident.
- If a student has not been granted an accommodation and refuses to comply, report the incident to Sara Kellogg, Assistant Dean of Students and Director of the Office of Student Conduct (x4-1020, skellogg@iastate.edu) within the Dean of Students Office.

Please do not contact ISU's Department of Public Safety for instances of individuals not wearing face coverings.

The Office of Student Conduct has developed for faculty a set of [scenarios, responses, and proactive planning tips](#) for the classroom and learning environments. Additionally, the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching has developed the resource [Managing Disruptive Conduct in Learning Spaces](#) to help faculty with disruptive students.

On the basis of consultation with the Faculty Senate's Executive Board, deliberate and/or repeated failure by a student to comply with the university's COVID-19 health and safety requirements in a learning environment constitutes disruptive conduct in the context of the [Faculty Handbook](#) (Section 10.5, Addressing Disruptive Conduct in the Learning Environment).

Faculty have the authority and responsibility to deny a student entry into a classroom, laboratory, studio, conference room, office, or other learning space if a student is not wearing a face covering and/or face shield, or is obviously sick. If the student refuses and enters anyway, faculty (or a teaching assistant) should adjourn the class and report the incident to the Office of Student Conduct as described above.

An escalating set of administrative actions can be taken in response to deliberate and/or repeated disruption, including restrictions on the student's access to, or use of, university facilities; removal from university housing; required transition to remote-only instruction; involuntary disenrollment from one or more in-person courses; and other measures as necessary to promote the health and safety of the campus.

I ask that faculty and Directors of Graduate Education share this information with their teaching assistants.

Health and safety syllabus language

The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching has developed a number of template syllabus [statements](#).

The following new language has been developed in collaboration with the Academic Continuity Workgroup, Dean of Students Office, and Faculty Senate Executive Board, and it is to be included verbatim in the syllabus for any course you teach having an in-person component:

COVID-19 health and safety requirements

Students are responsible for abiding by the university's [COVID-19 health and safety expectations](#). All students attending this class in-person are required to:

- properly wear a face covering and/or face shield, covering the nose and mouth, while in classrooms, laboratories, studios, offices, and other learning spaces. It is important to remember that a face covering and/or face shield is required to be worn whenever you are on campus, in the presence of others, and unable to maintain physical distance.
- practice physical distancing to the extent possible;
- assist in maintaining a clean and sanitary environment;
- not attend class if you are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19;
- not attend class if you have been told to self-isolate or quarantine by a health official.
- follow the faculty member's guidance with respect to these requirements. Failure to comply constitutes disruptive classroom conduct. Faculty and teaching assistants have the authority to deny a non-compliant student entry into a classroom, laboratory, studio, conference room, office, or other learning space.

These requirements extend outside of scheduled class time, including coursework in laboratories, studios, and other learning spaces, and to field trips. These requirements may be revised by the university at any time during the semester.

Faculty may refer matters of non-compliance to the Dean of Students Office for disciplinary action, which can include restrictions on access to, or use of, university facilities; removal from university housing; required transition to remote-only instruction; involuntary disenrollment from one or more in-person courses; and such other measures as necessary to promote the health and safety of campus.

It is important for students to recognize their responsibility in promoting the health and safety of the Iowa State University community, through actions both on- and off-campus. The university's faculty asks that you personally demonstrate a commitment to our [Cyclones Care campaign](#). Iowa State University's faculty support the Cyclones Care campaign and ask you personally to demonstrate a commitment to our campaign. Your dedication and contribution to the campaign will also protect your classmates and friends, as well as their friends and families.

Class attendance

Some students may have unavoidable conflicts that delay their arrival on campus or ability to start classes on August 17, including scheduled work, internships, family commitments, or difficulty traveling to Ames. In addition, some students could be required to self-isolate at the very beginning of the semester to protect the broader community.

Faculty set their own policies on class attendance ([Faculty Handbook](#), Section 10.4.1), and excused absences from class are handled between the student and instructor. In setting policies and making decisions, faculty should consider the potential need for students to stay home when they are not feeling well, and to self-isolate if they are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive for the virus. I ask that faculty be as flexible as possible, and likewise, we will ask students to be flexible if a faculty member becomes ill and unable to teach.

In collaboration with the Faculty Senate's Executive Board, the validating enrollment registration requirement has been suspended for the fall semester. According to this policy, students are typically expected to validate their enrollment in a course by attending the first or second class meeting. This temporary action promotes flexibility and will help students who may be unable to timely arrive on campus by preventing them from being automatically dropped from courses.

When the final class schedule is released on August 3, the university will centrally communicate to students their need to contact instructors if they miss classes during the semester's first week. That guidance has been provided to those students and parents who have already shared this concern with the university.

In addition to supporting students who miss class due to the pandemic, faculty should actively encourage students who are not feeling well, or who are self-isolating, to stay home without penalty for their absence. For the fall semester, compliance with public health recommendations (including self-isolating because of a positive COVID-19 test; waiting for a test result; or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms) will be considered a university excused absence. In some cases, students may need to temporarily leave the university for medical reasons to focus on their health.

Department chairs and program directors should work with faculty to discuss and develop temporary approaches related to failing students who have accumulated significant absences. I ask that faculty and chairs/directors work together to explore alternative arrangements for students having absences related to COVID-19, such as assigning a grade of incomplete and enabling the student to complete their coursework subsequently. Again, faculty have authority and responsibility for these decisions. As in many aspects of fall planning, these guidelines are intended to balance the need of additional flexibility for some students with meeting our priorities for academic continuity.

First week communication to students

The Academic Continuity Workgroup is currently preparing guidance and template language that faculty can use when establishing and communicating expectations to students at the very beginning of the semester. These statements will be helpful to ensure students understand your expectations relative to the course, and will support their adjustment to the new learning environment they will experience this fall.

Closing

I want to thank you for the very hard work you are currently doing to prepare your classes for the fall. The pandemic has impacted you personally and professionally, and has created additional complexities and responsibilities for your work at Iowa State University. I appreciate your dedication to our students and colleagues, and to the university's land-grant mission, and wish you the best.

JAW/jj

C: Wendy Wintersteen, President
Pam Cain, Interim Senior Vice President for Operations and Finance
Erin Baldwin, Interim Senior Vice President for Student Affairs
John Lawrence, Vice President and Chair of Fall Planning Committee
Provost's Council
Academic Department Chairs
Carol Faber, President, Faculty Senate
Sara Parris, President, Professional and Scientific Council