

8/10/2020

Fall semester 2020

Colleagues,

As summer winds down, I know many of you are turning your attention to this fall semester and have additional questions and concerns about what the next academic year will look like. Given the events of the summer and continued uncertainty as COVID-19 continues to spread, we will be facing unprecedented challenges as we strive to deliver our academic programs. This will not be an easy year, but we will all get through this if we work together.

The key word for the fall semester is flexibility. We need to remember that the challenges posed by the current pandemic will impact everyone (students, staff, and faculty) in different ways. Everyone will have to balance unique work, school, and family obligations. We have worked to ensure that we have the technological tools necessary to allow as much flexibility as possible for course delivery and hope that faculty and staff will be sensitive to everyone's unique circumstances.

There are going to be challenges. Even with lots of planning, we know that problems will arise. Some of these may be related to the technologies that we are using to allow us to effectively offer face-to-face courses this semester. So, in addition to flexibility, we ask for your patience and ingenuity when things go wrong. While we ask that you help provide solutions to some of these issues, know that we will also work to address challenges as they arise — and we will be here to support you through this academic year.

Our first priority is to promote everyone's health and safety. We are asking that you follow the following safety guidelines for the fall semester:

1. Check each day for any symptom that may be indicative of a COVID-19 infection (e.g., cough, sore throat, fever, runny nose, sneezing, loss of smell or taste, etc.). Anyone experiencing any of these symptoms should stay away from campus and consult with a healthcare professional for further advice.
2. Anyone who has had significant exposure (e.g., close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19) or who has tested positive for COVID-19 should remain off campus and quarantine or isolate as necessary. Faculty and staff should notify UVU of their exposure or positive test result and work with the university on a [return-to-campus plan](#). The purpose of this plan is to assist the university in contact tracing.
3. Faculty and staff who are symptom-free, have not been diagnosed with COVID-19, have no significant exposure, and have not recently traveled out of the country may come to campus for face-to-face courses, or to work in their offices, under the following conditions (see safety guidelines on the [Return to Campus website](#)).
 - a. Everyone must properly wear appropriate facial coverings or masks (must always cover BOTH mouth and nose) when on campus (e.g., in classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, open office spaces, etc.). Facial coverings MUST be worn at any time when near another person. You do not need to wear a mask in a private office when working alone.

- b. Please maintain social distance (at least six feet) whenever feasible. No one may congregate anywhere on campus and should avoid direct personal contact with anyone (shaking hands, hugging, etc.) while on campus.
- c. Wash and sanitize your hands on a regular basis. Washing your hands for 20 seconds (sing the alphabet song slowly) with soap and water or the use of hand sanitizer should be done regularly. You should work to avoid touching your face, nose, face masks, etc., and should wash hands again if you do. Pay attention to how many times you reach to touch your face during the day — you will be surprised.
- d. While in the classroom remind students to comply with safety guidelines, including wearing masks (see below for enforcement concerns). Faculty must wear a mask, or in some cases a face shield, while teaching in class.
- e. Supplies will be available in classrooms for sanitizing your own personal space. Contrary to rumor, faculty are not expected to do general cleaning (i.e., mopping floors, general cleaning, maintenance, etc.).
- f. Follow any specialized instructions designed for safety in labs or other courses where close proximity may be necessary. Your chair or dean will advise you of any specialized restrictions or guidelines that you must adhere to and enforce.

At this time, more than half of our students are registered for at least one face-to-face course. However, only 32% of section seats are currently enrolled as face-to-face. The vast majority of our students will be taking courses online. For those faculty who have elected to teach their courses in either an online or livestream-only format, we greatly appreciate your efforts over the summer to develop a quality online experience for our students. As you make your final preparations for the fall, I encourage you to draw on resources from the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) to help ensure you offer the best online experience possible. The courses should run with the least risk of interruption due to COVID-19 outbreaks.

Those who have elected to offer face-to-face courses this fall, including myself, face the greatest risk of disruption and challenges from COVID-19. While we have implemented safety measures that reflect current best practices, the risk of transmission cannot be eliminated. Members of our UVU community will inevitably be exposed to, experience symptoms of, and test positive for COVID-19. It is one of the unavoidable risks of being in close proximity to other people. This may occur both on and off campus. Some of our students and instructors will likely face health risks that prevent them from attending class — thus, being flexible for those enrolled in and those teaching face-to-face courses will be critical.

As for safety measures, the following measures have been undertaken: 1) Classroom seating capacities have been reduced to help ensure social distancing; 2) Classrooms will be cleaned on a regular basis; 3) Cleaning supplies will be made available in each room for individual cleaning; 4) Hand sanitizer will be readily available on campus; 5) Facial coverings or masks (properly worn) will be **REQUIRED** for everyone in common areas, including classrooms; 6) Signs stating mask requirements will be posted in each classroom; 7) Everyone will be asked to self-monitor for symptoms and to stay off campus when ill; 8) People should be on campus only as necessary to conduct university business.

Faculty teaching face-to-face courses will need to work to ensure that students comply with safety guidelines, especially the wearing of facial coverings. One of the most common questions has been about the enforcement of safety guidelines. We know that faculty do not want to spend considerable

time and effort enforcing safety policies and confronting those who may refuse to comply. To address these concerns, we recommend the following:

1. At the beginning of each class, remind the students of the safety guidelines and that masks or facial coverings must be properly worn (covering the mouth and nose) at all times. Faculty must also wear a mask or facial covering during class.
2. Should a student refuse to comply, he or she should be asked to leave the classroom and advised that they may still participate in the class via livestreaming. This would ideally be conveyed in a nonjudgmental way, such as, "If you cannot or will not wear a mask, we do have a livestreaming option available for you."
3. Should a student continue to refuse or only temporarily comply with an instructor's directive, the student should be reported to the [Student Conduct office](#). No further enforcement actions are recommended at that time.
4. Should a student become belligerent during class, we ask that neither the instructor nor other students confront the offending student. Ideally, work to de-escalate the situation (see attached guidelines) and report it to the [Student Conduct office](#) after the fact. Should the situation pose a significant risk to the class (e.g., a significant number of students refuse to properly wear a mask), the instructor may elect to cancel the class for the day and then report the offending students to Student Affairs.
5. If a student becomes in any way verbally or physically violent at any time, the instructor should contact campus police immediately at (801) 863-5555. Campus police will respond to address a disruptive or violent situation. They will not respond only to enforce mask policies. This should be a last resort when other attempts have failed.
6. Students who are reported for violations of university policy will be subject to sanctions under the student conduct code. They may be removed from the course and could face additional sanctions up to and including expulsion from the institution.
7. Keep in mind that while some students may have health exceptions related to wearing masks, any student who will not or cannot wear a mask should be asked to participate in class via livestream. If the student can't wear a mask due to disability or medical issue, refer them to [Accessibility Services](#).
8. Should an instructor feel that students are generally non-compliant and consistently refusing to follow safety guidelines, the instructor may exercise discretion to move the course to a fully remote format. Please work with department chairs, deans, and the provost's office to address these situations.

We have been working over the summer to install cameras in classrooms that will allow for livestreaming in addition to the face-to-face experience. This was necessary for some classes that will be required to alternate students between in-class and livestreamed class days. Additionally, as students become exposed or test positive for COVID-19, it will be necessary to keep them off campus. Livestreaming will allow students who are able to continue to participate in class while isolating at home. The lectures will be posted to the appropriate Canvas course.

We have asked faculty to divide classes by birthdate to determine who attends class face-to-face versus remote on any given day. The key is going to be effective communication with students. Reach out this week to let students know how you will be managing your class this fall. Please check with your department chair if you have questions or concerns about your face-to-face modality. Faculty who

become aware of a student who does not have computer or internet access at home can direct them to the library, which has a limited number of laptops and hot spots for our most vulnerable students to check out.

For all classes, there will be situations where students are advised not to come to campus due to health and safety concerns (i.e., significant exposure, travel, symptoms, or a positive test for COVID-19). In these cases, students may need to miss two weeks or more of their face-to-face class. In many cases, they may still be well enough to participate in their face-to-face class through livestreaming. There may also be students who have life situations that necessitate they attend all of their face-to-face classes via livestream (e.g., modifications to a child's school schedule, a family member becomes ill, etc.). We ask that each instructor work with their students to assess their needs and accommodate them as best as possible. There may be some situations where a face-to-face meeting is essential. In such cases, safety guidelines should be strictly followed, and students should be accommodated as much as possible. In all cases, students with health- or disability-related concerns should be directed to the Office of [Accessibility Services](#) for appropriate formal accommodations.

As faculty and staff, we are not only vulnerable to COVID-19 — it potentially poses a greater health risk. There is a likelihood that a faculty member may be exposed to, develop symptoms of, or test positive for COVID-19 during the fall semester. Instructors should have a plan in place for transitioning their face-to-face class to an entirely remote class in the event of such an emergency. Should health conditions require that a faculty member stay away from campus while they are well enough to conduct their course remotely, they may be able to livestream their course from their home. Notification of such changes may be sudden — even the day of class — so be prepared to notify students via the Canvas website whenever a situation may arise that requires the instructor to deliver the class remotely.

Faculty should also prepare for a situation in which they are, due to illness, no longer able to teach their course. Faculty should work with department chairs to develop contingency plans, especially for high-enrollment courses, in the event that a faculty member should become ill and unable to complete their course assignments.

Finally, everyone must be prepared for the possibility of moving courses to a remote format on a moment's notice. UVU officials will be monitoring local health and safety conditions on a daily basis. Should the university determine that conditions are no longer safe for face-to-face instruction, courses will move to remote delivery.

All non-course-related activities should generally be conducted online. Departmental meetings, appointments, etc. should be conducted online. Individual meetings with students should be conducted online when feasible. Individuals should not gather or linger in public spaces. Whenever anyone is in a public space, face coverings are mandatory.

Additional information will be coming over the next couple of weeks. Please check your email and the [Return to Campus](#) website for critical information for the fall semester. If you have any questions that have not been addressed, email us at academiccontinuity@uvu.edu.

Most importantly, thank you for all that you do! This is going to be a very challenging year. Problems will arise. Be patient and flexible, and let's work together to get through this challenging time. We are here

to help you address those challenges so that we can continue to provide our students with a meaningful educational experience.

Sincerely,