**Returning to the Classroom – Fall 2021**

In-person classes are key in providing the energy, opportunities for collaboration and overall experience that make a University of Arkansas education unique. It’s what we do best.

Please know that the university’s COVID-19 Response Team continues to monitor the situation and will revise guidelines as needed. We ask that you remain flexible and ready to adjust as the health and safety of the campus community will continue to shape all decision making.

**Encouraging Vaccination**

While not mandatory, vaccination is our primary means for preventing the spread of COVID-19 and the development of variants.  We are working to reinforce this with our campus community in many ways including incentives and targeting our student population through a series of social media efforts and other more direct messaging, part of a larger communications campaign designed to increase the number of fully vaccinated individuals on campus.

Message from Dr. Huda Sharaf, PWHC Medical Director, Dr. Huda Sharaf:

*Unvaccinated individuals are being disproportionately impacted at staggering rates. The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) reports the following breakdown of the state’s COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths in 2021:*

* *More than* ***90%*** *of current active cases are not fully immunized.*
* *More than* ***99%*** *of those hospitalized for COVID-19 are not immunized.*
* *More than* ***99%*** *of those who died due to COVID-19 were not immunized.*

*This delta variant is affecting younger people in very serious, life threatening ways and is avoidable with vaccination.*

As we make plans to return to face-to-face instruction for the fall semester please consider:

**Faculty are expected to teach classes face-to-face with students except for online and approved remote classes.**

* The university is requiring everyone to wear a mask in the classroom.
* Faculty may encourage students to become vaccinated, but they cannot require or coerce students to become vaccinated and must tell them that vaccination is not mandatory.
* Academic incentives for vaccinations are not allowed.
* Seating charts are not required.
* Faculty may assign seating in the classroom. If the classroom is large enough, faculty may leave the front row empty. Faculty may not assign seating based on masks or vaccination basis.

**Faculty control class attendance**

* Faculty should inform students in their syllabus how they will handle class attendance.
* Faculty are encouraged to be lenient with class attendance policies, so students are not inclined to attend class when sick.
* Faculty are required to provide class information to students who must miss class due to COVID or other excused absences. This can be done as you did before the pandemic, or through class recordings.
* Faculty can but are not required to teach a hybrid class to accommodate absent students.
* Faculty can allow individual students to view recorded lecture instead of attending face-to-face lecture during pandemic. \*
* If a student requests in writing (i.e. email) not to attend a face-to-face lecture but view a recorded lecture, it is up to the instructor to decide if they are willing to accommodate the student’s request.
  + If the instructor chooses to allow a student to not attend a face-to-face lecture and view a recorded class.
    - The instructor must keep the request in writing (i.e., an email) to document that the instructor is accommodating the student’s request.
    - The instructor must provide that student access to the lecture material (PowerPoints, handouts, etc.) and a recorded version of the lecture.
      * In addition to the recorded lecture, the instructor may also choose to allow synchronous (live) viewing of the lecture.
    - This does not mean that instructors can convert a course to remote delivery. The instructor must lecture from the classroom and accommodate any student who chooses to attend a face-to-face lecture.
    - The instructor should send the following email to students to determine which students choose to view recorded lecture instead of attending the face-to-face lecture.

*As the COVID-19 delta variant is increasing in our area, my class attendance policy will allow you to view a recording of the class lecture instead of viewing a face-to-face lecture. I will under normal conditions be lecturing face-to-face in the classroom if you want to attend the face-to-face lecture. If you would like to view the class recording instead of attending the face-to-face lecture, please send an email directly to me at* [*xxxx@uark.edu*](mailto:xxxx@uark.edu) *making this request. Please remember that I reserve the right to stop the viewing of recorded lectures and require face-to-face attendance at any time.*

A copy of this email is highly important to confirm that the instructor is accommodating an individual student request to not attend face to face lecture.

* + - Students must be allowed to attend a face-to-face lecture on any given day.
    - Instructors can stop the viewing of the recorded lecture at any time they choose to do so.
* CEA accommodations may require instructors to provide individual students access to the lecture material (PowerPoints, handouts, etc.) and a recorded version of the lecture.
* Keep in mind that students may become ill with COVID-19 and need to isolate or need to quarantine due to Covid-19 exposure during the semester.  If we are fortunate, the Covid-19 situation will improve as the Fall semester progresses.
* As stated above, the instructors control their individual attendance policy, but flexibility should be a key feature.

**Faculty are encouraged to record classes, but they are not required to do so. However, some CEA accommodations may require class recording.**

* Faculty control who views the class recordings.  Due to FERPA regulations, do not share class recordings from one section with students in another section.
* Faculty control when to delete class recordings.
* Campus has invested in additional microphones and cameras to increase the quality of the class recordings.

**Office hours are managed by faculty and can be face-to-face or virtual.**

* Faculty can indicate their preference for virtual office hours, but they must accommodate all requests from students for face-to-face meetings.
* If the faculty’s office is small, they can choose an appropriate safe location for the face-to-face meeting (conference room, etc.).

**Department chairs/heads will deal with faculty absences as they have in the past.**

* Another faculty member may step in and deliver lectures face-to-face.
* Remote delivery is also available on a very short-term basis. Face to face lectures in the classroom is expected.

**Faculty should prepare students to pivot to remote delivery on short notice.**

* Having a practice class or event within the first two weeks of class is recommended.

**Syllabi statement about wearing masks in the classroom**

Below is a suggested syllabi statement about wearing a mask.

***You must wear a mask while in class*** *for your protection and for the protection of those around you. Masks must be properly worn, over your nose and mouth. If you do not have a mask, please let me know, and a mask will be provided for you.*

\* Thanks to David McNabb, Chair of Biological Sciences and member of the University’s Communicable Disease Outbreak Committee, for his assistance compiling information related to students viewing recorded lecture.