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From: Office of the MSU Provost <provost@montana.edu>
Sent: Thursday, August 26, 2021 5:28 PM
Subject: Faculty guidelines for classroom facemask requirement



Office of the Provost

Dear MSU Colleagues,

As an additional mitigation effort against the spread of COVID-19, effective today Montana State University is requiring face coverings (masks) for students, faculty and staff in all indoor instructional spaces on campus until Oct. 1, as described in the email from President Cruzado on Aug. 26. I am writing to provide guidance on the logistics of this requirement and to ask your cooperation and perseverance.

The recent requirement to wear masks when indoors in instructional spaces – classrooms, labs and studios– will help us work with our students and colleagues in creating a social norm that recognizes we’re all in this together. We are encouraging a willingness to put aside individual preferences for the greater good of our campus community. Many of our students will follow this requirement, especially when their faculty instructor uses a considerate and thoughtful approach at the start of **each** class period.

We may initially see less than full adherence with a first-time announcement or presentation. Consequently, we will need to be consistent and persistent in pressing for a norm of wearing masks out of respect for each other and because of our collective desire for in-person interactions. This is going to take equal measures of grace, kindness and consistency to norm the desired behavior across campus.

There ARE several approaches you can use to encourage students to think beyond themselves and to wear masks while indoors on their own volition. Following is a list of some ideas that could effectively help to increase mask wearing in the classroom. You would not use all of these ideas, but perhaps using two or three suggestions from the list will help improve participation.

- Model the behavior you’d like to see by wearing a face covering anytime you are in public areas inside an MSU building.
- Share with the students your personal reasons for wearing a mask and appeal to them to do the same based on common values of respect for others and protecting the vulnerable.
- Read or re-post the President’s message (or excerpts thereof)

- Bring extra masks to class for students who forget theirs. Your department may have a supply. If not, ask your department to contact the MSU Office of [Safety & Risk Management](#) for a supply of disposable masks for this purpose.
- Express positive reinforcement with those who do wear a mask.
- Explain how the [delta variant](#) is more infectious and why that drives the need to return to face coverings indoors.
- Point out the current [CDC](#) and Gallatin City-County Health Department guidelines, noting that our county is an area of high transmission.
- Share current data on [COVID infections](#) and hospitalizations for Gallatin County. You can find this at: <https://www.healthygallatin.org/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Try to create empathy among the students for those who are vulnerable or who live with members of our more vulnerable populations.

While facemasks are preferred, faculty and GTAs are permitted to wear face shields when teaching, providing the shield meets the requirements described [here](#). Faculty and GTAs do not need to go through an ADA or HR process to gain permission to wear a face shield for teaching.

Face-covering in indoor instructional spaces is expected. If a student does not wear a mask in class, our first preference is to address it through a conversation using a social reinforcement, educational approach. Instructors should allow the student to explain their action and views in person, or via email, in a way that might help facilitate understanding as a teachable moment and without public shaming. Instructors can explain the university's requirement while using some of the discussion topics listed above.

If adherence is not achieved with an educational approach, an instructor should remind the student that continuing to disregard the requirement will result in a referral to the Dean of Student's office.

If multiple requests to don a facemask continue to be ignored, the faculty instructor should document the circumstances, after class, including the name of the student(s) involved, date and location of occurrence, and steps that were taken by the instructor to remedy the situation. Faculty can send the documentation of alleged violations of non-compliance with the mask requirement to the Office of the Dean of Students at: <https://www.montana.edu/deanofstudents/>. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) should forward the documentation to their supervisor.

To reinforce this approach, students will receive an email from the Dean of Students informing them that the facemask requirement will be enforced from the Code of Student Conduct. For your information, that email can be found in the Dean of Students archive: <https://www.montana.edu/deanofstudents/StudentEnewsArchives.html>.

Even with the mask requirement, which we hope will be temporary, we need to recognize there are limitations and actions that instructors **cannot** use such as canceling a class meeting, moving a class online, imposing academic penalties against non-mask wearers, providing academic-related rewards for mask wearers, or discriminating against an individual based on the wearing or non-wearing of masks.

Additional guidance for instructors is provided on the Center for Faculty Excellence web page, [here](#).

In summary, our goal is to create a social norm that recognizes we're all in this together with a willingness to put aside individual preferences for the greater good of society. In many instances, it will not be accomplished with a one-time announcement or presentation. We will need to be consistent and persistent in pressing for the new norm.

Thank you for that persistence.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob".

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