

Date: January 11, 2022

From: Chuck Taber, Provost and Executive Vice President

To: Department Heads and Faculty

RE: Spring 2022 Preparation Guidance for Instructors

As we prepare for the start of the spring 2022 semester, I thank you for your continued work to provide an exceptional educational experience for our K-State students. Even though it has been difficult, you have proven the strength and quality of K-State faculty. I am grateful for successful and committed colleagues who know that student success is key to university success.

As noted in Monday's [K-State Today article](#), we begin the spring 2022 semester amid a surge in COVID-19 cases and the likelihood that the Omicron variant will continue to affect classroom activity and campus life, especially at the start of the semester. It is likely that more students than usual will have to miss class during the first weeks of the semester as the Omicron variant makes its way through our community. We will continue to work to keep each other safe through the pandemic.

We also want to make sure students remain enrolled and we want to facilitate their continued learning through this difficult time. To this end, below I offer some strategies to consider as you finalize your course syllabi and as you move through the beginning of the semester. We will also continue the following protocols:

- **COVID-19 exposure, isolation, and quarantine:** The university has adjusted [its isolation and quarantine procedures](#) following the recently updated timelines adopted by the CDC. The new CDC guidelines shorten the time most people who have tested positive for COVID or are a close contact will need to isolate or quarantine.
- **Indoor Face Masks:** The temporary indoor facemask requirement means that everyone must wear face masks over their mouths and noses in all indoor spaces on university property, **including classrooms**, unless alone in their own private offices or workspaces.
- **In-person learning:** Faculty and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) may temporarily adjust class modalities due to COVID-19 impact on in-person class attendance. If a faculty member or GTA believes that a **temporary** move to fully online instruction better supports student learning, they must do the following:
 1. Consult with their department head to obtain approval.
 2. Communicate the temporary move to online instruction to the students with a clear start and end date.

3. If a high isolation/quarantine rate persists after the designated end date of the temporary move to online instruction, the period may be extended with department head approval.

Department heads will track any approved temporary shifts to remote instruction on the reporting spreadsheet and provide the documentation to the Registrar's Office at the **end of the semester**. The Registrar's Office will need the course subject, course number, start and end date of temporary remote option, date of student communication, reason, approval department head name and approval date. It is **not** appropriate to declare the shift of an in-person class to fully online instruction for the entirety of the semester. Any exceptions need Dean and Provost approvals.

- **Student Notifications of COVID-19 absence.** The Omicron variant cycle suggests you may have more students out of class this semester; however, absences will in many cases be for shorter durations. Due to the need to respond more quickly to the higher number of students expected to be impacted by the Omicron variant, particularly at the beginning of the semester, the Offices of Student Life (OSL) on our campuses will no longer automatically verify COVID-19 related absences. It is the **student's responsibility to provide the initial communication** to their instructors about the need to miss class for any COVID-19 illness, isolation, or quarantine needs.

We ask that for the Spring 2022 semester, **all faculty provide academic assistance and adjustments for students** who need to miss class due to COVID-19-related illness, isolation, or quarantine, or any other illness they may experience throughout the semester **without OSL verification**. Students will contact you directly for modification of assignments, exams, or other forms of classwork due to COVID-19.

If you notice a student with multiple COVID-19-related or any chronic absenteeism, please ask students to fill out an absence verification form and/or contact OSL on your campus about that student of concern. It may be that they require more attention to successfully navigate the semester.

- Manhattan campus: [absence verification form](#) and [student of concern form](#)
- Salina campus: [absence verification form](#) and [student of concern form](#)
- Olathe campus: contact Kimberly Voight at 913-307-7313 or kvoight@ksu.edu

In addition to continuing to wear face masks, utilizing temporary pivots to online learning, and accommodating students affected by COVID-19, I ask that you continue to exercise flexibility, use best practices, and integrate commonsense measures throughout the semester. As you finalize your syllabi, consider the following strategies:

Participation: Post your expectations and your procedures to work with any ill, isolated, or quarantined students clearly on the course syllabus as well as prominently on your Canvas course. While you can make clear your expectation that all well students will attend all in

person classes, labs, and studios, to reap the benefits of the course activity, please create pathways for students to engage in the learning process asynchronously when they are forced to miss class. For instance, you could provide make-up assignments or alternative activities that allow students to demonstrate engagement with course material. Your modeling of creative alternatives will motivate and challenge your students to meet the course learning outcomes during these challenging times.

Access to Lectures and Discussions: Consider providing opportunities for students to access your lectures and synchronous discussions via Canvas, especially during the first part of the semester. This will assist the students affected by COVID-19, but also provide a way for well students to review materials as needed.

Assessments: Continue to use multiple, lower stakes assessments of student learning. Break high stakes exams into smaller ones or create alternatives to traditional examinations that will still challenge students. You and your colleagues have successfully demonstrated new assessment skills. Use the [Teaching and Learning Center's teaching chats](#) (Wednesdays at noon on Zoom) to connect with colleagues about how to make it work for you.

Class travel and experiential learning: Consider the responsibilities of [travelling with students](#) for class trips, conferences, and / or service learning. Plan for the eventuality of COVID-19 disrupting plans before or during the trip and be sure everyone is aware of travelers' responsibility for unexpected or additional travel expenses, including potential isolation or quarantine costs. Integrate alternative activities into your syllabi to meet those learning outcomes.

I recognize that teaching during the pandemic requires extra thought, time, and energy. It is important to also take care of ourselves as we move forward. Please continue to use and update your COVID Impact Statements so that your efforts are recognized in any discussions of reappointments, promotions, awards, and tenure decisions.

Finally, I would like to reiterate how proud I am of you, our K-State faculty and GTAs. I see you continuing to adjust, to flex, to work harder than we have before for our students, on our RSCAD, for our colleagues, for our families and friends, and for ourselves. Sustaining this level of effort is not easy. Your resolve and perseverance are appreciated.

For assistance with developing syllabus statements, articulating participation expectations, or modifying assignments, please join the [Teaching Chat](#) on Wednesday, January 19, 2022 via [Zoom](#). If there is anything that the provost's office can do to assist you as we journey through spring 2022, please do not hesitate to contact the following offices:

- Teaching and Learning Center, teachingandlearning@k-state.edu
- Office of Student Success, studentsuccess@k-state.edu
- Office of the Registrar, registrar@k-state.edu
- Office of Institutional Effectiveness, tgonzale@ksu.edu

We are here for you, and we look forward to working with you to provide an excellent and engaging K-State education.

Sincerely,
Chuck