

Hi,

Welcome to the new academic year! Faculty Senate held a called meeting yesterday to discuss Covid-19 planning for the fall semester, and I am writing to let you know some information from that meeting. I have attached a guidance document, much like the one we distributed last August, which discusses key aspects of teaching and working with students.

We are building on the hard work and success of last year in planning our approach this year. Last academic year over 50% of our courses were fully in-person, and 75% of our classes had an in-person component. With vaccines now widely available, I have confidence we can teach in-person again this year. I do not anticipate a need to go fully online as an institution.

Here are the highlights of what has changed (or returned to normal) this year:

- Undergraduate classes are being held fully in-person. Students have not been offered the option to attend classes virtually; they are expected to attend classes in person. While there are a few courses in an alternate format or modality due to parental leave or to Covid-related ADA accommodations, the overwhelming majority of undergraduate classes are being held fully in-person at the normal course caps.
- The daily class schedule is back to normal with 10 minutes between classes on MWF and 15 minutes between classes on TR.
- Classroom furniture is back to its pre-pandemic arrangement; there is no social distancing. In classrooms where it is possible, you can encourage students to spread out.
- Cleaning products will still be available in classrooms, but faculty do not have to spray student desks or wipe down the instructor work station before the next class.
- Faculty have discretion in whether or how they use Zoom as a pedagogical tool to enhance the in-person learning experience; it should not undermine that experience. You are encouraged to state in your syllabus and talk with your students about how you plan to use Zoom in your course, if at all.
- We anticipate there will still be some students who will have to be quarantined or isolated due to Covid-19. Faculty need to state explicitly in their syllabus how they will work with students in quarantine or isolation. Faculty have discretion in determining the means by which they will work with those students, such as through live Zoom, recorded lectures, or individual meetings. Please see the attendance statement Faculty Senate passed in the attached document for the precise language adopted.

For now, masks will be worn regardless of vaccination status in indoor public spaces, including classrooms. We will be continually monitoring public health conditions and will regularly reevaluate masking and other policies over the course of the semester. However, no changes to the mask policy will occur before classes start. Here are some additional details you should know about masks:

- Instructors in the performing arts have latitude in order to achieve student learning outcomes. Please work with your department chair and dean.
- If you are outside, you do not have to wear a mask.
- If faculty are concerned about being able to project their voice through a mask, we have a few personal microphones left over from last year. We also have clear masks available for faculty who want those. Please ask your department administrative assistant to reach out to Kim Wingo in Academic Affairs, if you would like to use a microphone or clear mask.

Yesterday Faculty Senate had a chance to hear from Justin Pope, Matt McGregor, and Jen Fraley about other aspects of Covid fall planning. The Covid Dashboard will restart, and as was done last year, regular email

updates will be provided to the campus community. The opening faculty meeting will take place next Friday, August 20, and if further Covid-related questions arise we will do our best to respond to them there.

Faculty Senate also postponed some questions for further research and discussion. Several people asked whether faculty can know the vaccination status of individual students in their classrooms. They cannot, due to disability law and FERPA. We will explore what faculty could know about the collective vaccination status of students in a particular class while still preserving students' privacy. Others asked whether individual faculty could continue to require students to wear masks in their classroom, if and when the mask mandate is lifted for vaccinated people. This question merits further discussion by faculty in their departments and in Senate.

I hope you have had a productive summer, but one that also has given you a chance to rest and recharge. We have all dealt with a tremendous amount of uncertainty and change over the last 18 months. Many of us are still grappling with what the pandemic, political and economic crises, and struggles for racial justice have wrought. And now we must begin to confront the reality that Covid-19 is going to be with us for the indefinite future, and we must learn how to adapt to live with it.

As members of the Longwood community, we should continue to offer grace to ourselves, to one another, and to our students. Our commitment to one another and to our students is our greatest strength and a cornerstone of our residential experience. That commitment will help us to navigate successfully the shifting circumstances and unanticipated challenges ahead.

I look forward to seeing you next Friday at the faculty meeting. Have a good weekend.

Best wishes,
Lara

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