

Planning for Spring 2022 Instruction

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Dear colleagues,

As President Pestello mentioned in his [recent message to the community](#), we intend to remain open and have in-person classes begin, as scheduled. We are very aware that an increase in COVID-19 infections – even among a fully vaccinated and soon-to-be boosted campus – is likely and will create inconvenience and disruption to our work.

Therefore, I write to update you on **how we will approach academics, in the context of what we anticipate will be an increase in positive COVID-19 cases on campus at the beginning of the term.**

Note: A similar letter (with some identical language) will be shared with students and forwarded to you. That version emphasizes what students (and families) can expect in the near term and reminds students of their responsibilities with regard to coursework.

The key points from my message below are all addressed and expanded upon in the [Spring 2022 Faculty Guidance for Instruction](#) webpage. If other guidance becomes necessary, it will be added to this page.

Flexibility is Paramount

For at least the first few weeks of the semester, both faculty and students will need to remain flexible as the COVID landscape continues to evolve quickly. Cancelled flights and other travel disruptions will impact everyone's ability to return to campus. You (or your household members) might test positive as well, which will prevent your return to campus for a period of time.

What You Should Be Prepared for: Some Shifting Course Modalities

All instructors who teach in-person courses need to be prepared for a number of different scenarios depending on their COVID status and health, and that of their students. More specifically, all of the following *may* happen this semester:

- You might be isolating and need to teach classes virtually for a period of time.
- You might be isolating and be unable to teach classes for a period of time. In some such cases, you might need to cancel a minimal number of class sessions (just as you would for any other type of very short-term illness you experience). In other cases, you'll need to discuss with your chair the wisdom/possibility of faculty colleagues stepping in to take over your course(s).
- Due to COVID-related illness and isolations, the number of students able to attend classes in person in a given week might vary significantly from other weeks. And this could happen at multiple times throughout the coming weeks.

All of these potential scenarios mean that you need to be monitoring how fluctuating in-person attendance in your courses meaningfully impacts the integrity of the student learning experience. If,

based on your assessment, a *temporary* modification to how you'll teach the course(s) is warranted, then you are free to enact that change. Communicate fully and regularly with all students, and keep your supervisor (chair or dean) informed, as well.

Remember: We have heard from both faculty and students that the "dual mode" approach is not ideal, so this will only be allowed at your discretion and only for a short time period to help us navigate the shifting COVID landscape.

Your decisions to temporarily modify course modalities will depend on a number of factors, including: your pedagogical approaches, the types (e.g., lecture, lab/studio) and sizes of your courses, any external accreditation restrictions, etc. As always, consult your department/college/school colleagues for advice, and contact the staff of [the Reinert Center](#) for additional help determining how best to proceed.

And because of the changing COVID situation, if you are currently facing a long-term COVID impact on your health (or the health of a household member), we have reopened the process by which you can request to teach fully online this semester. The considerations to teach online are the same as they were in fall 2021 (personal medical circumstances, or other COVID-19-specific circumstances, including international travel/visa disruptions caused by the pandemic).

If you fall into one of these categories and need to submit a new request to teach fully online in the spring, please utilize the ADA process in Workday (for personal medical circumstances) or work with your academic leadership (for international or other COVID-19 circumstances) to understand whether a new exception can be approved.

What We're Reminding Students

In other communications, we're reminding all students who are *not* restricted from class due to isolation/quarantine that they **are expected to attend class in person**. Additionally, they are responsible for communicating any absences to you, as instructors, and for keeping up-to-date with the content and assignments in your courses. While you might allow students to attend certain courses via Zoom for an isolation-related absence, you might ask students in other courses to stay current in other ways. As the instructor, you should provide reasonable options that students are given to "stay current" in your courses (accounting for their abilities given their own COVID statuses, of course).

Considerations for Staff

Staff members in Academic Affairs and across campus will also be impacted by positive COVID tests and will need to isolate during the semester. When this occurs, staff will work with their supervisors on coverage for their responsibilities, and make sure that on-campus work supporting students takes priority; some staff will likely work from home, temporarily, if possible. Much like I have done for my regular staff and leadership meetings for the month of January, I encourage all departments and offices to conduct virtual meetings as much as possible, and continue to monitor the pandemic for any changes as the semester progresses. I am very appreciative of the balancing act that our staff need to manage to make all of this work in support of our students and faculty.

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I know that everyone is tired of the changes and uncertainty. So am I. But I know we can do this – and we are doing what we can to help everyone plan, to the extent possible, ways to appropriately adjust course plans this spring.

We will continue to assess the impacts of the pandemic on a weekly basis, and keep the community updated as we move forward. ***I strongly urge everyone to check your email regularly for updates from the President's office, our public health experts, and other leaders across campus as the semester progresses.***

I know this is another big ask for our entire community, and I really appreciate everyone's efforts, flexibility, and attentiveness as we continue to navigate the ever-changing pandemic. May grace and understanding continue to be hallmarks that carry us through.

Sincerely,

Mike Lewis, Ph.D.
Provost