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Subject: Fall 2021 Information for Faculty
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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

Fall 2021 Information for Faculty August 23, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

Fall Semester is here! I have a sense of excitement and anticipation that always accompanies a new academic year full of potential for our students and our own work, but as I imagine it is for many of us, that anticipation is tempered by the impact of the ongoing health crisis we are facing.

While we may not be entering the semester in the circumstances we had anticipated when our planning began in the spring, we have made notable strides in our understanding of this disease, the power and potential of the vaccine, and ways in which we can adapt to changing circumstances, most recently via our [soft opening plans](#). We realize that this change came quickly. We have already seen faculty working through the best options for their pedagogy and their students, asking thoughtful questions, and accelerating communication plans during an already busy week of meetings and re-engagement with the campus.

Our priority is to deliver the best versions of our amazing UHD education. At this time, we are prepared for a fall class slate that includes all modalities. We are doing so with the expectation that all in our community will play their part in maximizing health and safety precautions.

We will continue to monitor the local and statewide health situation, advocate thoughtful and compassionate strategies wherever possible, and communicate with our staff, students, and faculty frequently and openly.

This email offers a set of information that can inform your preparations for this fall semester. Please review it carefully, share with incoming adjunct colleagues, and feel free to direct any questions to my office. The e-mail is long, but we want to be as thorough as we can at this time. Much will be available on our website as indicated via links throughout. We are here to support your success, your wellbeing, and your critical work with our students.

The email contains the following sections:

- General Safety Protocols
- COVID exposure or diagnosis and classrooms
- Syllabus Information (reminders of previous messaging)
- Office Hours

- Meetings
- Accommodations for students with COVID
- Use of technology in classrooms
- Technology for students
- Travel

General Safety Protocols

- While UHD cannot mandate vaccines and masks, UHD recommends full vaccination for all of its community members and will soon roll out an incentive plan for vaccination. Please see our [website for on-campus vaccination events](#).
- UHD encourages each UHD community member to take individual actions known to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including the wearing of masks indoors as per the Department of State Health and CDC, regular hand washing and sanitizing, and regular testing, which is free at the UHD kiosk—check out details on [our website](#).
- Every classroom scheduled for usage has a Plexiglas shield at the front podium, has wipes available for all to use and is fully fogged every evening, which is the maximum recommended CDC protocol. During the first week of class, each room will contain a box of masks. [If there is no shield, please contact Ms. Cynthia Vargas at vargasc@uhd.edu]
- Hand sanitizer is available throughout campus, including throughout faculty office floors.
- PPE is available upon request throughout the semester (including face shields for you and masks to take to class) via your department DBAs, and faculty are welcome to encourage, though not require, the use of face masks in the classrooms.

COVID-19 Exposure or Diagnosis and Classes

NOTE: We are working to update our [COVID webpage](#) and encourage you to refer to that resource throughout the semester for the most up-to-date information. You may also contact uhdcovid19@uhd.edu with questions.

- If you think you might have COVID-19 due to the presence of COVID-19 symptoms, you should not come to campus, and you should message your students if you need to cancel any imminent class and contact your department chair to identify any future plans needed; then please see the COVID webpage for additional steps and return to campus protocols.
- Students, faculty, and staff who are directly exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19 should immediately leave campus, notify their supervisor or instructor, and self-report to the university using forms found on the **right side** of the [UHD COVID-19 Webpage](#). The reporting forms are designed to help you determine next steps based on a series of questions.
- **For classes with in-person meetings (FTF or Hybrid): If any member of the class reports a positive diagnosis while on campus**, instructors should follow [instructions](#) for immediate action (also posted in all classrooms), starting with immediate dismissal from class and recommendation for all to leave campus and to follow the exposure to COVID protocols. The UHD contact tracing team will contact relevant class members and the instructor with appropriate steps, which may include self-isolation for a period of time. Contact tracers follow protocols developed by public health experts. They are authorized to request information on vaccination status for public health purposes, as part of their process to determine appropriate next steps.

- All students and faculty should be responsive to contact tracing outreach and watch for emails through official UHD email accounts for any information about class meetings or follow-up steps.
- The Office of the Provost will work with Emergency Management, Department Chairs, and faculty to determine the best course of action for a course where a positive COVID-19 diagnosis occurs. Given the possible range of scenarios, we are prepared to consider a range of options to maximize safety and minimize disruption. We ask that faculty consult with department chairs before making decisions about announcements to their classes regarding extended strategies (e.g., beyond an immediate situation requiring class cancellation or dismissal).
- Please note that if a classroom needs to be cleaned as a precaution, we may need to relocate or possibly cancel a class that is scheduled during the cleaning time; we will try to notify faculty in advance if possible, but we appreciate your flexibility if we are not able to provide advanced notice.
- If a student tells you that he/she has COVID-19 outside of a classroom context, please ask the student to self-report via forms on the website, but also contact Ms. Cynthia Vargas *by phone* at 713-221-5848. If you email her, please do not include student name.
- Note that students experiencing illness or self-isolation due to COVID-19 may be eligible for short-term academic accommodations. Faculty should encourage students to make this request through the [Office of Disability Services](#) in order to offer consistent experiences for students and offer support to faculty in what is/is not expected in terms of course adjustments.

Syllabus Information

As per the newly revised [PS 3.A.29 Course Syllabi](#), the Office of the Provost has developed a set of shared, common syllabus language in consultation with Senate leadership. **Please note that this is expanded and revised from information previously communicated.**

At this time, we ask that faculty **read all of the new syllabus language** and then decide whether to include it directly in the syllabus or link to the [University Common Course Syllabus Language](#) document.

If you choose to include the link rather than full language, please be sure to list what is covered so that students will know where to find it:

- Responses to University-Wide Disruptions
- COVID-19 Exposure or Diagnosis
- Safety Precautions
- Student Support Services
- Student Counseling Services
- Accessibility and Statement of Reasonable Accommodations
- Technology Requirements
Testing and Final Exams
- Use of Blackboard, Gatormail, and Zoom
- Recording of Class Sessions
- Academic Honesty
- Book Purchasing

In particular we note a couple of new components from the policy that require specifics in your own syllabus language: 1) any materials, activities, or testing requirements that may have additional cost, and 2) articulation of camera presence that may be expected for synchronous class sessions.

As noted in an earlier email, we have put together a new [Syllabus Resources webpage](#) in Academic Affairs page under “faculty resources” which includes information on *Requirements for faculty in planning for classes, a Syllabus Checklist, Tips and Resources, and Recommended Syllabus Template from the Online Task Force.*

Office Hours

As announced in various messaging, faculty should schedule specific office hours for meeting with students each week and indicate those times on the syllabus. The number of office hours is determined by department and college practice. We ask faculty to take into account student demand and offer in-person appointments to students if requested.

Meetings

Department, committee, and unit leaders on campus are empowered to consider meeting options that best suit the type of event, type of work that needs to be accomplished, number of participants, room spaces available, and types of safety precautions possible when planning meetings.

Accommodations for Students

Students experiencing illness or self-isolation due to COVID may be eligible for short-term academic accommodations. Faculty should encourage students to make this request through the [Office of Disability Services](#) in order to offer consistent experiences for students and offer support to faculty in what is/is not expected in terms of course adjustments. Please remember that faculty cannot require documentation regarding an individual’s specific medical or health information for any reason and should not request it.

Use of Technology in the Classrooms

In the past year, we have expanded our technology capacity in our classrooms.

All classrooms have the *potential* of allowing Zoom into the room, but you may need to request a webcam if the room does not have one, and the functionality is very limited (basically to the scope of the webcam and volume associated with the computer itself) and is not designed for regular Zoom engagement by students. While you are not expected to offer this option to students as a general practice, you may choose to do so when working with Disability Services for short-term accommodations.

Some classrooms have what we are calling “HyFlex” technology, which has larger screens in the back of the room, two monitors at the front podium and tracking cameras with ceiling microphones. That equipment is for use with specially scheduled HyFlex classes that have students attending both by Zoom and in person—these courses are on the schedule and are coded for proper reporting. If you are not teaching a scheduled HyFlex course, you do not need to use any of the extra equipment in the room. However, if at some point you think you might like to use this modality on a regular basis, please contact Dr. Michelle Moosally at moosallym@uhd.edu before engaging in any changes to your class structure to ensure that you can get the needed support, and that the university can track and report accurately. For more information about HyFlex at UHD, please see our [HyFlex webpage](#).

Technology for Students

Our Dean of Students, Dr. Meritza Tamez, is partnering with IT to provide technology to students as resources are available. If you know of a student who is seeking technology

resources, please have them contact uhdstudentaffairs@uhd.edu and/or complete [this form](#).

Travel

Faculty travel is being approved through our [current travel protocols](#) on the COVID webpage and currently requires approval of the Provost.

Thank you for your continuous work and commitment to our students.