

## **PANDEMIC/ENDEMIC PLANNING TASK FORCE INTERIM REPORT AND PHASE I RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Pandemic/Endemic Planning Task Force was formed by Interim Provost Mendez and President Shrum on September 9 and co-chaired by Mindy McCann and Stephen Clarke.

### **Pandemic/Endemic Planning Task Force Membership**

- Sergio Abit, Associate Professor, Plant and Soil Sciences  
*Ferguson College of Agriculture*
- Clint Aichele, Associate Professor, Chemical Engineering  
*College of Engineering, Architecture, and Technology*
- Stephen Clarke, Professor and Head of Nutritional Sciences  
*College of Education and Human Sciences*
- Christie Hawkins, Associate Vice President and Director  
*Institutional Research and Analytics*
- Natasa Kaurin-Karaca, Clinical Associate Professor, Music  
*College of Arts and Sciences*
- James Knapp, Professor, Geology  
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- Amy Martindale, Assistant Dean, Academic Services  
*College of Arts and Sciences*
- Mindy McCann, Professor and Chair, Statistics  
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- Amanda Morris, Professor, Psychology  
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- Chris Ormsbee, Associate Provost and Director  
*Institute for Teaching and Learning Excellence*
- Rita Peaster, University Registrar  
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- Mary Jo Self, Associate Professor, Educational Leadership  
*College of Education and Human Sciences*
- Jim Smay, Professor, Materials Science and Engineering  
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- Sheri Vasinda, Associate Professor, School of Teaching, Learning, and Educational Sciences  
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- Lex Washington, Associate Professor, Management  
*Spears School of Business*
- Parna Ghosh  
*Graduate and Professional Student Government Association*

**Meeting dates: September 16, September 21, and September 23, 2021**

**The task force identified two priorities (or phases):**

1. (Phase I) Provide recommendations for the Spring 2022 schedule
  - Timeline was very short to accommodate Spring 2022 advising and enrollment.
2. (Phase II) Provide recommendations for Spring 2022 (unrelated to the schedule) and for the Summer/Fall 2022 semesters
  - Timeline is (slightly) more relaxed.
  - Task force will address these additional topics and upcoming two semesters in its next meetings.

**The goals identified by members of the task force include:**

- Provide recommendations for faculty and graduate teaching assistants/associates who may have health concerns that put them at risk for COVID-19 infection and/or related complications;
- Maintain high-quality and transformational instruction for students;
- Where justified by previous enrollment data, expand online courses to meet student demands;
- Mitigate, as much as reasonably possible, the potential for transmission of COVID-19 related to in-person instruction;
- Collaborate with academic and support units to modify and revise courses to accommodate faculty and student concerns while minimizing disruptions to the educational process and student experience;
- Seek input from both tenure track and non-tenure track faculty to examine pedagogical approaches that leverage faculty strengths and expertise to contribute to a meaningful learning experience that preserves the health and well-being of students and faculty

**Key Considerations**

1. Pursuant to Oklahoma Senate Bill 658 (amending 70 O.S. 2011, Section 1210.191) and Executive Order 2021-16, a universal mask mandate or vaccination requirement for faculty, staff, and students is not permitted.
2. Social distancing measures employed in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 are not an option.
3. Any changes to class structure or instructional modality will not result in an overall reduction of class seats/course capacity available to students. In general, to maximize classroom utilization, classroom density/capacity may not be reduced below 50%.
4. Continue with current course approval process for online courses, deviated courses, etc.

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Statement on COVID-19 Mitigation Efforts**

*To maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, get vaccinated as soon as you can and wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission.*

## Phase I Recommendations

1. Continue existing strategies currently in place for Fall 2021, including:
  - a. Utilize EO process to provide faculty and GTA accommodations
  - b. Continue virtual office hours and virtual advising through the remainder of the Fall 2021 semester and the Spring 2022 semester
  - c. Continue current attendance policy (attendance may be required by instructors) and provide consistent messaging related to expected attendance of in-person courses to students
  - d. Continue providing current options available to faculty when a positive case is identified in a class, and reassess as needed based on CDC guidelines for areas of substantial or high transmission of COVID-19:
    - Move the course online
    - Teach in a hybrid format (part online/part in class) to ensure social distancing and reduce further exposure. For students attending a face-to-face class, masks will be required
    - Continue the course as face-to-face with masks required of all students attending
  - e. Continue quarantine approaches currently in use
  - f. Continue to monitor and follow CDC guidance and revise university-wide mitigation strategies as transmission rates change or as new variants emerge
2. Provide flexibility and empower unit heads to work with faculty to develop mutually agreeable solutions that address COVID-19 related faculty concerns not accommodated by the EO process. This flexibility should be universally encouraged and embraced across academic colleges. Class structure/instructional modality options include;
  - a. Reduce student density for an in-person class by adding a separate synchronous online section that is cross-listed with the in-person section of a course (i.e., livestreaming an in-person class). The online section must be 100% online, including exams.
  - b. Reduce student density by using a hybrid format. If a course is listed as hybrid, the class schedule should specify when students should be in-person and when they should be online. It is ideal to build separate sections that specify when students should be in-person and when they should be online.
    - One section with Tuesday in-person and Thursday online cross-listed with another section with Thursday in-person and Tuesday online.
    - Online instruction with fewer in-person meetings per semester for assignments or exams. Use of general university classrooms will likely limit this to evenings, weekends, or late afternoons.

- c. Reduce student density by allowing faculty to split one higher density section into two lower density sections (depends on room availability; may not necessarily result in a reduction of other instructional assignments).
- d. Reduce student density by allowing faculty to split up one 16-week course into two 8-week hybrid sections that meet half-time in-person in a standard time slot and half-time online.
- e. Encourage colleges, schools, and departments to share locally-controlled spaces with other academic units to allow for more effective space utilization.
- f. In the event a larger classroom is required to reduce student density, consider using historically low-fill or low-enrollment time slots (e.g., MWF 7:30 – 8:20 AM, 8:30 – 9:20 AM, 3:30 – 4:20 PM, 4:30 – 5:20 PM or later; and TR 12:00 – 1:15 PM). Before changing a course time, academic units should consider students' other required courses to avoid key time conflicts that would negatively impact degree progress.
- g. Other options that are mutually agreeable to faculty and college administrators that provide appropriate accommodations without negatively impacting enrollment, progress towards degree, or quality learning experiences

The Registrar will be sending a separate communication with implementation details that will also address the online/hybrid approval process.