

Date: October 18, 2021

From: Chuck Taber, Provost and Executive Vice President

RE: Course Policy and Student Success Reminders

Dear University Leadership and Faculty,

Kansas State University takes great pride in being a student-centered research university. Our faculty excel in RSCAD *and* teaching, which is a key component to our historical success as a land grant institution.

Our legacy of excellent and careful teaching has continued throughout the pandemic. As we pass the mid-point of the Fall 2021 semester, I write to remind the campus of expectations for course policy and student success practices that should continue even as we see improvement in COVID-19 statistics.

Temporary Mask Mandate: The mandatory syllabus statement that was adjusted for the Fall 2021 semester states, “All students are expected to comply with K-State’s face mask policy. As of August 2, 2021, everyone must wear face masks over their mouths and noses in all indoor spaces on university property, including while attending in-person classes. This policy is subject to change at the university’s discretion. For additional information and the latest on K-State’s face covering policy, see <https://www.k-state.edu/covid-19/guidance/health/face-covering.html>.”

This syllabus statement sets the expectation for everyone inside classroom spaces and allows faculty to ask students to continue to comply with our temporary mask mandate in accordance with K-State’s principles that guide the decisions related to operations during the pandemic, namely:

- Continue to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, GTAs, staff and our communities.
- Maintain high-quality learning environments for our students.
- Balance the needs of students and faculty/GTAs.
- Be adaptable to respond to changing conditions related to COVID-19.

Under no circumstances may faculty tie course grades to compliance with K-State’s face mask policy. If faculty have issues with particular students who refuse to comply with the temporary face mask policy, they should contact the Office of Student Life for support as indicated in the [Face Mask enforcement guidance](#).

Academic Integrity & Assessment: In my January 8, 2021 note regarding [Academic Integrity Recommendations and Tools](#), I encouraged everyone to use their syllabi as the first introduction to course policy and course expectations. I laid out how to discuss academic integrity, expectations for

assignments and other assessments, and I also recommended incorporating lower stakes assessments and building professional relationships with your students to encourage retention. As we enter the second half of the semester, I urge you to revisit this memo and engage in conversations about academic integrity and remind students about your expectations for assignments and make explicit the available pathways to succeed in your course.

During these stressful times, it is imperative to be clear and forthcoming about our course expectations. Providing students regular and timely feedback on their performance, being clear about the information for which they are accountable and making learning paths visible for students will motivate and assist them to meet the learning outcomes for your course. Increased communication with your students and colleagues about teaching and learning is proven to improve student perceptions of their learning. For additional tips and resources, please utilize the [Teaching and Learning Center's professional development series](#) which includes teaching chats for more personalized discussions about your teaching practices.

Students Health & Well-being: If you notice that the semester stress is affecting student performance, their physical and/or mental health and well-being, please continue to show care and flexibility as students work to overcome these obstacles and meet their responsibilities in your course. Whether or not these are related to the pandemic, we can point students to resources for their continued success and retention into our courses.

As a reminder, Kansas State has a variety of resources available to students:

- Office of Student Life – www.k-state.edu/studentlife/
- You at KSU – you.k-state.edu/home
- Lafene CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) – www.k-state.edu/counseling/index.html
- Academic Achievement Center -- www.k-state.edu/aac/
- Educational Supportive Services -- www.k-state.edu/ess/
- Scholars Assisting Scholars (SAS) Tutoring (College of Engineering) - www.engg.ksu.edu/student-success/sas/
- Tutoring Services -- www.k-state.edu/aac/tutoring/
- Writing Center -- www.k-state.edu/english/writingcenter/
- Student Ombudsperson -- <https://www.k-state.edu/diversity-inclusion/resources/student-ombudsperson/>

Thank you for continuing Kansas State University's legacy of teaching excellence and care for our students.

Best,

Chuck

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