

From: UCCS Faculty Assembly List <FA-I@lists.uccs.edu>

Sent: Friday, March 4, 2022 3:26 PM

To: FA-I <FA-I@lists.uccs.edu>

Subject: [FA-I]March FA President's Report

I want to highlight a couple of things happening at our March 11 Faculty Representative Assembly meeting. **We will be voting on the New IRC Promotion Policy.** This has been a long time in development, but the IRC Committee has now endorsed its adoption and we are entering the home stretch in finalizing it. Assuming the resolution passes, it will go to the cabinet for provisional approval and then out for the 30-day comment period. **This represents a milestone in the long journey of achieving equity for IRC faculty.**

We will also hear **a presentation from the Retention and Graduation subcommittee of the Enrollment Management Team.** This is an administrative committee, not a committee of the faculty assembly, but a number of our most expert faculty in this arena sit on this subcommittee. You may recall that they conducted a brief survey last month. They will present those results, as well as talk about the work they have been doing. **The goal is to provide a basis for representative assembly to make some recommendations to the faculty for how faculty can focus their already existing work in teaching and service on supporting our students to complete their degrees.**

On Monday the campus goes mask-optional for most things, including in-person classes. **The faculty, based on the discussion we had at the last representative assembly meeting, broadly disagreed among ourselves about what the campus should do.** Much of the discussion centered on those who are more vulnerable, either because they are personally more likely to be harmed by the virus or are living with someone who is. In the end, **the campus concluded that there are a number of ways in which the vulnerable can be accommodated or can protect themselves.**

The provost posted a great explainer on Tuesday (attached) that addresses many of the questions faculty may have about what they should and should not do under the new policy. I would also like to address some concerns faculty may have and raise a couple of things for your consideration.

If, like me, you are older (65, in my case) or have an even more vulnerable family member at home, **you are probably wondering how to ensure your (and their) safety.** I have done what I could to become informed on some of these issues.

The first thing you should know is that **the prevalence of the virus in El Paso County has dropped dramatically.** The current 7-day infection rate per 100,000 is down to 52. Even before the recent revisions to CDC recommendations, that's only two cases per hundred thousand above the standard for lifting mask mandates. **On campus, which has always been lower, reported cases have all but disappeared.** In the last seven reported days there have been exactly two cases (a rate of 15 per hundred thousand). I know that some cases go unreported, or even unnoticed by the infected person, but that is still a dramatic decline from our peak of 390 cases per hundred thousand in mid-January. **The virus is not gone, but the odds you will be exposed to a contagious person have become much, much smaller, especially on campus.**

You should also consider the data on **the impact of vaccines on becoming infected, hospitalized or dying from Covid.** There's a roughly **75% drop in your likelihood of being hospitalized if you are vaccinated,** relative to those who are not. Even more encouraging is the **additional 75% drop in the likelihood of being hospitalized if you have been boosted.** Given the lowered chances of being exposed, if you are vaccinated and boosted, **your chances of ending up in the hospital with (or dying of) Covid are almost vanishingly small if you don't have some other factor that makes you more vulnerable.** If you are below 60 years old and have no complicating conditions (or don't have to worry about exposing someone who does) **going to class and other social situations without a mask is pretty darn safe if you are boosted** (so if you are vaccinated, but not boosted, you may want to take advantage of the free clinics on campus to get boosted).

So that's great news, **but what about those of us who are vulnerable in one way or another?** The evidence is increasingly clear that **a high-quality mask is effective at preventing transmission, even when only the uninfected person is masked.** High quality in the most authoritative study I saw was an N95, even if not fit-tested. In that study, **the N95 was essentially perfect in preventing an infection for an exposure of 2 ½ hours,** coincidentally the length of a once a week 3-credit course meeting. **N95s are available for free at the University Center Information Desk.** I'm going to be wearing my trusty genuine KN95 mask, which fits me well, is easier to talk in and is nearly as effective.

One last thing (I promise). **Some of our students have similar cause to be cautious.** I hope you will **find ways to make your classroom as mask-friendly as possible.** **Some students will be self-conscious about wearing a mask** when no one else (perhaps including you) is. If you can set a tone of understanding and support for why some people choose to wear masks, I am sure that will go a long way towards easing that discomfort.

Pressing on,



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From: faculty-l <faculty-l@lists.uccs.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, March 1, 2022 11:43 PM
To: faculty-l <faculty-l@lists.uccs.edu>
Subject: [faculty-l] Moving to mask option in our classrooms

Message from:
Kelli Klebe - kklebe@uccs.edu

Faculty,

I hope you saw the Chancellor's email about masks being optional on campus starting **March 7**. This is good news in that it means the COVID infections are decreasing; however, I know this may cause concern for some. I wanted to provide some expectations about what this might mean for the classroom.

- Please continue to wear a mask for as long as you feel comfortable and support that for your students as well. Surgical masks will still be available in the classroom. If they are not, please contact facilities to ask for more. N-95 respirators are still available for both faculty and students. [You can request them at this link.](#)
- You or students may respectfully request that masks be worn in classrooms, labs, studios, offices, etc. However, you cannot require that students wear masks. We hope that everyone will be considerate of one another's needs and respect individual choice. Consider talking with your class about why face coverings may still be needed/wanted for some and how to respect one another's choices.
- We are still asking people to stay home when they are sick. This may still require flexibility on your part for assignments and attendance. Continue to communicate with your students about your expectations.
- We hope that you will continue to teach in the modality that was determined at start of the semester. If you feel that you need to take your class remote, please work with your dean to get permission to change the class modality and if given approval then inform the registrar's office.
- You are NOT expected to change your in-person class to remote or hyflex if students ask. You may request face coverings of a class if you have students who have concerns about the masks (do not name the student to the class nor reveal health conditions if students are asking for this privately).
- I recognize that students may also have concerns about being in a classroom with unmasked individuals. It may be helpful to normalize continued mask wearing. If students want to drop a class the deadline to drop without permission is April 1.
- If you have research or creative work teams, please talk with the team members about expectations and concerns that others may have.
- If there are disruptions in class about face coverings, then you may ask people being disruptive to leave the class. If they do not leave you may contact public safety for assistance. You may report disruptive students to the [Dean of Students for classroom disruption behavior.](#)
- Face coverings may still be mandatory in certain places or with certain activities such as contracts which must follow federal guidelines, public transportation (but not UCCS Shuttles), and health clinics. Students doing internships or practicum are required to follow the rules at the site.

As we work through this latest COVID stage, please be kind and patient with others. We all need grace and consideration. We will continue to monitor conditions on campus and in the community and will return to use of masks or other safety precautions if needed. If you have concerns please reach out to me, your faculty governance representatives, and/or your deans.

I wish you well as we continue to navigate through this pandemic/endemic.

Kelli Klebe, Interim Provost