September 20, 2021

Divisional Chair’s Newsletter

Dear Colleagues,

I am glad that many of you were able to attend our recent, webinar-style Town Hall meeting for instructors on the Return to Campus and Fall Instruction, held September 13, 2021. For those who were not there, the presenter slides and a recording of the remarks are posted on the Senate’s COVID-19 webpage, and are accessible with a UCSBNetID. Of particular interest to instructors, the three presentations by Professor Scott Grafton (Psychological & Brain Sciences, and Campus COVID-19 Coordinator) on the assessment of recent COVID-19 data, Dr. Mary Ferris (campus COVID-19 Clinical Advisor) on campus vaccination and COVID-19 risk mitigation policies, and Professor Todd Squires (Chemical Engineering) on classroom ventilation assessments, can be viewed starting at 0 h 31 min, and lasting through 1 h 08 min.

Road map for fall instructional policies. A guide to the situations for which online or emergency remote teaching is allowed in fall quarter can be found here. In brief, all instruction is expected to be in-person, with the following limited exceptions:

1. courses with Senate approval for on-going online delivery of instruction (designated with a “W” in the course prefix, e.g., HIST W 8), regardless of the instructor;
2. courses which do not involve instruction, but are instead departmental colloquia or workshops with participants and/or speakers from multiple campuses, and which can therefore not be conducted in-person since some participants/speakers are necessarily virtual;
3. courses identified earlier this year as serving a large fraction of international students who were facing extended delays in obtaining visas (note that, since
visa delays appear to be largely resolved, no new courses are being approved for remote instruction solely for this reason);
4. courses taught by an instructor who has an approved medical accommodation from the Workplace Accommodations Specialist in Human Resources;
5. courses taught by an instructor with a documented Workplace Adjustment request due to cohabitation with an immunocompromised family member or other household member, submitted to and approved by their Dean;
6. courses being taught in-person that must pivot temporarily to remote instruction due to the required quarantine/isolation of the instructor, or the instructor's children under the age of 12
7. any and all courses for which remote instruction becomes necessary and mandated during the quarter due to a change in public health orders. If this occurs, more information will be provided by the Senate and the university administration about necessary adjustments.

Please note that for the purposes of this roadmap, the term “instructor” includes all faculty and graduate student teaching associates/assistants associated with a course. It is possible that one of a course’s instructors is eligible to teach remotely because of a medical accommodation or workplace adjustment, while the other instructors are still expected to teach in-person. Regardless of the reason for remote teaching, all instructors are requested to communicate clearly and promptly with their students about any change in the mode of instruction, and to provide them with a brief explanation (e.g., medical need, quarantine requirement), particularly if the change was recent or will be needed after the course begins.

Classes taught face-to-face for at least 50% of the weekly student instructional contact time are deemed by Senate policy to be in-person, even if some components (including but not limited to lectures, discussion sections, office hours) are conducted remotely. For example, a class with a T/R lecture and a discussion section could be taught either T(in-person)/R(online)/section(in-person), or TR(in-person)/section(online), and still be considered an in-person class.

Vaccination update. At the start of fall quarter, our campus community is now more than 95% vaccinated! Many thanks to those who are helping to keep our community as safe as possible by complying with the vaccine mandate. As of September 20, the vaccination rate among all of our students (undergraduate and graduate, including international students) is an impressive 96.8%, while employees (faculty and staff) are currently 90.9% vaccinated. These percentages are expected to increase even further as the quarter begins. Information on vaccination rates is posted on the campus COVID-19 dashboard, along with daily and weekly campus testing data and campus case numbers. For example, there were 2 “active” cases of COVID-19 among our campus community as of
September 18, 2021. (Note that asymptomatic cases are not considered “active”, even though such students are required to sequester and are not cleared to attend classes until completion of their isolation period.) The undergraduate student move-in began last week and continued through the weekend, and all students were required to be tested upon arrival. Although only about half of the test results have been returned so far (with the rest expected in the next day or two), there are only 5 positive tests as of Monday morning, September 20.

Instructors who have not yet complied with the vaccine mandate policy have been sent non-compliance notifications by email. Instructors who do not intend to be on campus at all during fall quarter (e.g., due to an approved leave, or an approved remote teaching accommodation) do not need to comply with the vaccine mandate until they return to campus, although they are encouraged to do so. Instructors in this category who delay compliance until their return to campus should notify Academic Personnel at inquiry@ap.ucsb.edu, so that their hold status is recorded correctly. An instructor whose leave status changes prior to the approved end date will be required to comply with the policy. Other instructors will be required to comply upon their return to campus.

**Updated guidance on masking.** The campus COVID-19 medical team has recently assessed and approved partially or fully transparent face masks for use in classrooms, in addition to the previously approved multilayer cloth- and surgical-style masks. Transparent masks may be particularly helpful in language classes. The following alternative surgical-grade styles (left: “Communicator”; right: “ClearMask”) have been approved (however, all-clear non-surgical-grade masks are not allowed):
Appropriate face coverings will be required at all times in classrooms, and signs indicating this requirement are being posted on classroom doors prior to the start of classes on September 23. We suggest that students be instructed not to eat or drink in class, thereby precluding the need to remove their masks during lectures. Rarely, a student may have a Disabled Students Program (DSP)-approved accommodation because they are medically unable to wear a standard facemask. In such cases, the instructor will be notified via a DSP “Instructor Letter.” Such students are required to wear alternative face coverings, such as a full face shield with a lower shroud. Consequently, instructors can expect that everyone in their classrooms will be wearing a face covering, no exceptions. Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Margaret Klawunn gave a very helpful presentation on how to talk with students about masking during the September 13 Town Hall meeting, and a video with advice on this topic will be posted on the Student Affairs website this week.

More information about the face masks and campus policy is available in the Campus Mitigation Protocols, as well as on the KeepTeaching website. Students can be directed to pick up free masks from the Ask Me kiosks that will be set up at multiple locations around campus (the Arbor, SAASB, Rec Cen, SRB, and UCen) and at Pardall Center in Isla Vista, through October 1. After that date, student public health ambassadors will distribute masks from information tables located around campus. Free masks for employees are no longer available from EH&S, but departments may obtain them from the UCSB Campus Store. Access is through the gray door at the receiving area/loading dock area on the west side of the UCen, between 8 am and 4 pm Monday-Friday. Please address questions about mask availability to EHS-covid19safety@ucsb.edu.

**Suggested syllabus language.** Instructors are advised to include information on their course syllabi and/or Gauchospace pages regarding:

1. compliance with the UC COVID-19 Vaccination Policy, including completing the daily symptom survey and weekly testing for non-vaccinated students;
2. classroom masking policy;
3. classroom eating/drinking policy;
4. the imperative for students who are ill not to attend class, and your expectations for how these students should keep up and/or catch up;
5. the expectation that your course materials, including recordings, may not be distributed or sold;
6. protocol for students who do not want to be included in classroom recordings; and
7. campus resources for students in distress, available at wellbeing.ucsb.edu.
Suggested language for syllabi about masking and other COVID-related procedures is also included in the Sample Syllabus Language from CITRAL and Instructional Development.

**Classroom ventilation information.** Classroom Readiness information is now posted on the EVC’s website. All Fall quarter instructors whose name is associated with a fall classroom assignment by the Registrar should receive an email today with a link to this page. It describes the ventilation assessments for all 98 general assignment classrooms, as well as 227 departmentally controlled classrooms and other instructional spaces. Instructors teaching in the subset of classrooms for which special recommendations have been made regarding ventilation will receive a second email with more detailed information, including recommendations for door/window configurations and additional measures taken to enhance ventilation (e.g., fans, filters). There are about 40 classrooms in this special category. The emails will be sent to instructors by classrooms@evc.ucsb.edu.

**Remote learning.** A very small number of students with serious medical conditions that cannot be reasonably accommodated in other ways may be granted access to remote learning during fall quarter, following a discussion between the DSP office and the instructor of the course. Students requesting remote learning as a medical accommodation should be referred to the DSP office. At this time, remote learning for these students is available only for the duration of the pandemic.

Instructors are encouraged to engage with the DSP office to discuss how to align their own teaching needs with the needs of their medically vulnerable students. Instructors contacted by the DSP office will be asked about the suitability of their course for remote learning. DSP accommodations cannot fundamentally alter the nature of the course, or significantly increase the instructor’s workload. The DSP office can provide an Access Ambassador to attend the class equipped with a device (tablet or laptop with web camera) to stream the lecture via Zoom to the remote student, and will provide proctoring for remote exams using Zoom in the campus Testing Center.

**Student housing needs.** Instructors may be approached by students experiencing housing difficulties with requests for remote learning. They should be referred to University and Community Housing Services (contact Mario Muñoz, mmunoz@housing.ucsb.edu and/or contact Jenn Birchim, jbirchim@housing.ucsb.edu). At this time, the campus is reporting that it has made housing offers to all single undergraduate and graduate students on the campus housing waitlist who lack other housing options. Therefore, housing needs
are not being considered as justification for remote learning in fall quarter.

**Looking ahead to winter/spring instruction.** Decisions about possible uses of emergency remote teaching options beyond fall quarter will be announced in November, based on the progression of the pandemic and public health projections at that time for winter quarter. We also expect further guidance from our accreditor, WASC, during fall quarter regarding future parameters for remote/online instruction. Instructors who wish to propose permanent online versions of their courses can obtain Senate approval by following the procedures described here. Such requests should emphasize the pedagogical justification for online instruction.

**Rebuilding community.** UCSB Arts & Lectures is organizing two free concerts for our community this month. Both events will take place at Storke Plaza at noon, on Thursday, **September 23**, and Wednesday, **September 29**. In addition, the Office of Undergraduate Education is sponsoring Lunch with a Prof. this fall quarter. Faculty can join students at various Dining Commons (with reserved outdoor seating) by ordering complimentary lunch tickets and selecting days to participate [here](#). Please join some of these activities if you are comfortable doing so; many of our students are eager to meet their instructors in person again, or for the first time. Faculty interested in participating in a peer support group can investigate the services offered by the [Academic and Staff Assistance Program (ASAP)](#).

**Fall Senate meetings.** In fall quarter, our priority is restarting in-person instruction successfully. Nevertheless, Senate councils and committees need to begin deliberations on many urgent issues soon. Committee chairs will assess the medical needs of all their volunteer council and committee members (some of whom may have remote teaching accommodations). We are aiming to minimize hybrid meetings, which tend to be less effective and more difficult to manage. We hope to transition to in-person meetings for many of our Senate councils and committees as soon as possible. However, Faculty Legislature meetings remain virtual in fall to maximize broad participation across the campus.

Senate members are always welcome to contact us with questions via email to our Executive Director, Shasta Delp, at shasta@ucsb.edu. You may find answers to some of your questions and those that others have asked on the [Senate’s COVID-19 FAQ page](#), as well as Instructional Development’s [KeepTeaching FAQ page](#). In addition, you may consult me personally in the Academic Senate office, Girvetz Hall 1233, on Fridays from 2-4 pm during fall quarter. I look forward to seeing you on campus soon, and to once again being a part of our vibrant community.
Sincerely,
Susannah Scott
Chair, Santa Barbara Division