

DRAFT-1: Faculty Guidance on Wearing Face Masks* and Social Distancing while on the UTEP Campus

The severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) causes human infection that can be asymptomatic without any evidence of disease or symptomatic with Coronavirus disease -19 (COVID-19) that can range from mild self-limited illness to a severe and fatal outcome. Although the infection may or may not cause disease, any infected person can transmit the virus to others through droplets and aerosolized virus expelled into the air by coughing and talking. Evidence accumulated during this COVID-19 pandemic indicate that the most effective basic safety measures for the prevention of virus transmission is to wear a mask, social distancing by staying at least 6 feet away from each other, and wash your hands frequently. However, everyone must be aware and understand that there are no known measures that can afford complete protection against SARS-CoV-2's infection.

Our role as faculty is critical in championing the health, safety, educational and operational plans to keep the UTEP campus community safe at all times. As so, our behavior during this COVID-19 pandemic must serve as a model for others on campus by practicing strict compliance with safety recommendations and guidance on returning to campus to teach or to conduct other faculty-related duties (research, advising, and/or service). The recommendations and guidance described below were prepared by UTEP faculty who are experts on the biology and prevention of the transmission of viruses in collaboration with representatives of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, including colleagues from Nursing, Pharmacy, Education, and Liberal Arts. Until further notice, these recommendations and guidance will be in effect if and while the UTEP campus is operating under evidence-based public health guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and guidance for preventing the introduction and/or inter-campus risk of contracting and spreading of SARS-CoV-2 both outside and inside campus buildings. Therefore, the overall purposes of the following recommendations and guidance pertaining to wearing masks and social distancing are to help the UTEP faculty establish and sustain a safe and healthy operating environment for the UTEP campus community during this COVID-19 pandemic.

The UTEP Department of Environmental Health and Safety will provide all faculty, staff, and students washable cotton cloth face coverings (masks). The UTEP masks must be worn on campus and either stored after working hours in a zip lock bag at UTEP or taken home in a bag for washing and drying to decontaminate any potential virus for continued use. Guidance will be provided to all on campus faculty, students and staff on how to best comply with wearing a mask and social distancing. All on campus faculty, students and staff will be required to attend a safety behavior practices compliance training to learn the proper procedures for wearing a mask and social distancing to prevent SARS-COV-2 infection. Participants will sign a Behavioral Agreement form indicating their willingness to comply with recommended public health and safety measures on campus. On completion of the compliance training modules, faculty, students and staff will be expected to understand and comply with the proper wearing and use of face masks. Whenever course activities take place face-to-face in the classroom, instructors and students must wear masks (not face shields), comply with social distancing, and instructors must use their own assigned microphones to facilitate communication, if necessary. The need for individual microphones or any other special equipment should be outlined in your safety work plan and in the work protocols established within your department or programs.

Sample Course Syllabus Statement on masks requirements to be included in course syllabi and in shared behavior/shared responsibility agreements in classrooms and labs.

The present course has a hybrid component that permits for actual face to face interactions with faculty and other students enrolled in this class. Everyone who attends in person activities must wear a face mask at all times while such meetings are taking place, maintain social distance of a minimum of 6 or more feet, and practice proper hygiene practices. Anyone not wearing a mask will be required to leave. As you enter or exit campus, minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection by the SARS-CoV-2. Use preventive safety and health measures at all times until informed otherwise by campus officials.

Guidance for UTEP Faculty Required use of Masks on Campus.

The primary purpose of these safety guidance is to serve as guidelines for UTEP faculty to help establish and sustain a safe and productive campus community in accordance with official policy of The University of Texas at El Paso and UT System's Policies and Procedures during the current public health emergency triggered by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The UTEP faculty must be aware that being granted access to campus does not imply being given access to all buildings on campus. Access to specific buildings, laboratories, and other areas around campus may be further restricted at various risk levels associated with this pandemic.

The focus of these recommendations and guidance are on the proper use of masks and social distancing, both well documented practices that help to prevent infected humans from transmitting SARS-COV-2 to others, and is a way of showing respect and taking responsibility for the health of self and others. Therefore, while on the UTEP campus, all faculty must wear a mask and must practice social distancing by staying 6 feet or more apart from each other at all times both inside and outside buildings.

1. The faculty recommends that UTEP be a designated "mandatory mask wearing" campus with messaging and signage to inform all faculty, students, staff and campus visitors of this universal expectation.
2. All faculty must properly wear face masks when engaging with each other, with staff and with students in classrooms, laboratories, and other public spaces.
3. We encourage faculty to wear masks when in their offices due to the potential airborne spread of the virus.
4. Elevators and restrooms are high-risk areas as a source of infection by the SARS-CoV-2. Therefore, masks must be worn while inside all on-campus restrooms and elevators. Individuals must not have conversations in restrooms or elevators, even when wearing a mask. Also, everyone must comply with the number of individuals authorized to occupy elevators and restrooms at the same time, which will be posted on all campus restrooms and elevators.
4. Safety plans for on-campus classes are available from <https://www.utep.edu/resuming-campus-operations/information-for/faculty.html>

The recommended masks include:

O Cloth face masks and/or surgical masks that cover nose and mouth. N95 masks are approved for use, though generally reserved for health care workers.

O The following face covers are not authorized for use because they are not effective for preventing the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from an infected person to others:

- § Face shields
- § Cloth masks with valves
- § Loose fitting bandanas

*The only exception to not wearing mask at all time is while individuals are at the specific outdoor locations on campus that are recommended to be designated as **mask-free zones** for use to drink, eat, and take a brief break. While at these locations, all individuals must maintain social distancing of 6-foot minimum, and must not move tables, seats or other items and must not stay in designated mask-free areas to for more than 30 minutes.