

As a preamble to our face mask policy, we feel it's important for everyone to understand the principles on which it was developed, which will also guide us as we implement enforcement measures for non-compliance. As we learn from other institutions of higher education, we find that our position mirrors that of Texas State University, so we'll adopt their words here.

"We understand some people may disapprove of wearing a mask. While the university respects those individual opinions, research has shown that wearing a face mask is the most important, and a potentially life-saving tool to slow the spread of COVID-19. We did not take the decision to require face coverings lightly. In the interest of public health, however, we are committed to this practice for the greater good of the community."

Some people who disagree with the concept of requiring face coverings have called it "unconstitutional." However, to be unconstitutional, a restriction must infringe a fundamental right such as freedom of speech or invasion of privacy or otherwise treat people unequally. Requiring students to wear a face covering on campus when it's not possible to practice physical distancing is a narrowly tailored and minimally intrusive mechanism, which is justified by the significance of the university's interest in helping to stop the spread of a highly contagious and deadly virus for the safety of the campus community."

Texas State University

Pittsburg State University COVID-19 Face Mask Policy (Rev. Aug. 27, 2020)

Face masks are worn to decrease the spread of viruses, such as COVID-19, from asymptomatic individuals to others. Face masks reduce the volume of respiratory droplets that are expelled during common social interactions and human functions such as talking, breathing, coughing, sneezing, and laughing.

Definitions:

Face masks- any type of cloth or disposable material that covers the mouth and nose and can be safely secured in place (looped around ears or around the head) while in use.

Face shields- clear plastic masks that cover the entire face. The [CDC](#) does not recommend the use of face shields as a substitute for masks. Face shields are not a replacement for face coverings, except in approved instances such as:

- While lecturing in a course to provide an accommodation for a student who may rely on seeing the instructor's mouth to understand content clearly.
- While lecturing or speaking to a group to support the ability to project audibly better.
- Individuals who have received an exemption from the face coverings policy from the Student Accommodations (students) or the Office of Institutional Equity (employees) and a face shield is deemed a reasonable accommodation.

Individuals wearing face shield without a mask must maintain six feet of physical distance from other individuals and it is recommended where possible to use an additional barrier such as plexiglass between an instructor and students.

Policy:

1. Students, faculty, staff and visitors must wear a face mask covering their mouths and noses in campus buildings, except while eating, or while alone in an enclosed private, single occupancy space. Face masks must be worn in non-private, single-occupant spaces that others use (public bathrooms, copier rooms, public study rooms).
2. A face mask is not required while outdoors or during outdoor exercise, such as walking, running, or biking, so long as 6 feet of physical distance can be maintained.
3. Students and visitors in residence halls must wear a face mask covering their mouths and noses in all hallways, public spaces, and other common areas of the residence halls. Students are not required to wear face masks in their own residence hall rooms.
4. Face masks must be worn in university vehicles with two or more occupants.
5. Face masks are not required in athletic facilities and recreation facilities (Student Recreation Center, Garfield Weede Building pool and racquet ball courts, Robert W. Plaster Center track and the strength and conditioning center) during training, but only if participants are able to physically distance at least 6 feet and protective measures are in place (do not share equipment, disinfect equipment between users).
6. Children under the age of 6 are not required to wear face masks on campus.
7. Individuals with recognized disabilities that prevent wearing a face mask who need reasonable accommodations should contact the Office of Institutional Equity (for employees) or Student Accommodations (for students) for assistance.

Compliance:

Failure to comply with this policy may result in denial of access to designated areas or participation in programs or activities, and/or discipline in accordance with applicable university policies. University employees have the right to deny others entrance into buildings or rooms. Individuals without a face mask can request a disposable mask from university offices.