

From: [MCGRADY, TRACY M.](#)
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 7:52 PM
To: [fulltimefaculty](#); [adjunctfaculty](#)
Subject: Provost's Notes: What to Say to Students

Good Evening, Faculty -

I have gotten a lot of questions about how to handle students who show up to seated classes not wearing a mask or exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, so I want to devote this Provost's Notes to providing you with some language to help you navigate these situations.

But first, please know that the college's goal is that students never make it to your classroom without a mask. We've been working all summer on developing a culture of masking at OTC, through several communications to students (more on that next week), in addition to the "Keep OTC Healthy" campaign at every location and on social media. Also, on the first few days of the semester, we will have security officers patrolling with a stash of masks, and all the fine folks who stand in the halls helping students find their classes will have some, too. The expectation will be set early and without subtlety.

However, let's face facts: It's likely that at some point, a student will show up to your class without a mask, especially at the beginning of the semester. It's also likely that as we approach cold and flu season, you will have a student showing symptoms in class. Here are some scenarios to consider and how to manage each one:

WHAT TO SAY TO A STUDENT WHO COMES TO CLASS WITH NO MASK

- **Never argue with a student.** Be firm, but polite at all times. Reinforce that the college is following the guidance of the CDC and local health officials. We are requiring masks because there is significant evidence that shows they work in helping prevent the spread of the coronavirus, and we care about each other at OTC.
- **Do not chastise a student for showing up without a mask;** simply direct the student to designated "masking stations" in every building (a complete list will be provided to you later this week), then encourage them to come back to class after they get one.
- **There are no exceptions to the mandatory mask rule.** If a student tells you they have a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a mask, direct them to Disability Support Services, who will engage in the interactive process with the student to determine the best accommodation. However, that accommodation will **not** be that the student goes without a mask.
- **Call Safety and Security** if needed. If after a couple of polite requests, the student still refuses to wear a mask, explain that you will need to call Security. If that doesn't do the trick, then call Security.

Note: If you must call Security, you can expect a pretty speedy response. Security officers will be stationed in every building, so while there may be a bit of a delay between the time you call and an officer gets to your classroom, it shouldn't be much of one.

WHAT TO SAY TO A STUDENT EXHIBITING SYMPTOMS IN CLASS

Another potentially difficult conversation is what to do if a student shows up to class exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. Because many symptoms are not outwardly visible (fever, fatigue, muscle

aches, etc.), it's likely the only symptoms you'd observe would be a cough, runny nose, or difficulty breathing.

- **Be sure the symptoms are persistent.** A student who coughs a few times in class should not be asked to leave; however, you'll want to address a student with a significant, persistent cough.
- **Be as discreet as possible.** Try to have a group work exercise (socially-distanced, of course) handy so the other students are working on something else while you talk with the student—either out in the hall or in an area of the classroom where others can't hear you.
- **Explain to the student why you think it's best that they leave class.** Ask the student how they are feeling, and let them know what you've observed. Explain that they've not done anything wrong, but that the college has directed you to ask students who are exhibiting symptoms to leave class out of an abundance of caution. They may push back and say it's allergies, that they're a smoker, etc. It is not up to you to make medical judgments; explain that this is simply the college's rule.
- **Reassure the student.** Tell them that someone from the college will call to check on them and that you will continue to work with them while they are out of class. Tell them you will stay in touch with them.
- **File an [OTC Cares report](#).** This is very important since this is the step that connects the student to a OTC Cares team member who will help them seek medical care and stay engaged in class while they are out.

WHAT TO SAY TO YOUR CLASSES STUDENTS DURING THE FIRST CLASS MEETING

I've saved the most important conversation for last. Because of the uncertain nature of the semester, it is **imperative that you use the first class period to set some expectations for the semester**. This is more important than even the syllabus. Save that for class period #2, if necessary. A few things to discuss:

- **Explain to your students how important it is that they stay home if they are sick.**
 - Tell them that if they show up to class with noticeable symptoms of COVID-19, **you will ask them to leave**. Reassure them that you will work with them and will not penalize them in any way for being absent if they don't feel well.
 - Students sent home from class may not be able to return for *either* 14 days *or* until they can produce a negative COVID test.
 - Explain that this is a college rule, and during a pandemic, the college is erring on the side of caution.
- **Talk with your students about a shift to remote instruction.**
 - Moving to remote instruction is a distinct possibility this semester, so talk with them about what to expect. Have a conversation about what this might look like. Get their input.
 - Get your students used to using Canvas from day one. Post assignments there, give them practice submitting assignments – whatever it takes to get them accustomed to using Canvas.
 - Do the same with Zoom, if you plan to utilize it. Create opportunities for students to Zoom with you – virtual office hours, “get to know me” assignments, etc.

Above all, be positive! The world has gone absolutely bonkers, and we're all looking for support wherever we can get it. I've said it before and research confirms: The connection with the teacher is the single biggest factor in student success. So whatever calamity befalls us this semester, your

connection with your students will transcend it. They will be looking to you for reassurance that, no matter what, this semester will be okay. And it will be.

THINGS THAT HAVE CHANGED SINCE LAST WEEK

Town Halls: We've got a few upcoming town halls scheduled for our employees to learn more about Fall 2020 planning and ask questions. The first will be for adjunct faculty during the Adjunct Educators Conference on Saturday, August 15 at 10:00 a.m. Here is the link to join: <https://otc.zoom.us/j/98908198637> There will also be a town hall for full-time faculty on Wednesday, August 19, and the college will be hosting a town hall for all employees coming up next week. More information about these events is forthcoming.

Adjunct Educators Conference: The virtual AEC will be held this coming Saturday. Click here for more information: <https://faculty.otc.edu/center/aec/>

Preparing to Pivot (P2) course: Wow, this course has been popular! Over 300 of you have signed up! If you haven't yet signed up, there is still time. This is the final week of the course, which ends on August 14. You may [register here](#). Remember that those who complete the course successfully are eligible to receive a \$200 stipend.

As a reminder, all Provost's Notes emails are being archived for later review at: <https://academics.otc.edu/provosts-notes/>

Next week, I'll share with you what students have been told to expect this semester. I know that will be helpful as you head into the first few weeks. Until then, what questions can I answer for you? Feel free to reach out; I'm happy to answer any questions and hear your thoughts.

Have a great week!

Tracy M. McGrady, Ed.D.

Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
Ozarks Technical Community College
1001 E. Chestnut Expressway
Springfield, MO 65802
417.447.8152