

NMSU NOW

Our dynamic pandemic action plan



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New Mexico State University
now.nmsu.edu

Shaping the future

New Mexico State University is, first and foremost, a learning environment, and we have learned much about the global COVID-19 pandemic throughout the past year. We learned even more about the novel coronavirus in its various forms: how it spreads and how to reduce that spread. We learned about our students: how they have adapted and how to address their needs. We learned about our workforce: how we have responded to the pandemic with resilience and resourcefulness. We learned that we can meet the challenge of carrying out our mission as an academic institution.

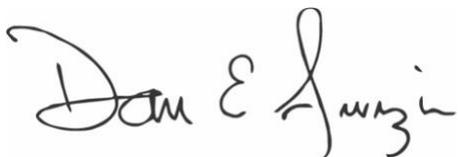
More challenges are ahead, and among them is assisting in the vaccination effort for our community and state. The December approval of two vaccines for the coronavirus was a crucial milestone, and we are optimistic that this will have a significant impact on our well-being throughout 2021.

We know that this change will not happen overnight; there are still limited vaccines available and much to learn about the vaccine's long-term ability to reduce the effects of the coronavirus. **But we do know that the habits we've established – mask-wearing, hand-washing, sanitizing, maintaining distance between people and avoiding large groups – will help keep us healthy in the months to come.** Our university system will apply everything we have learned as we move into the spring semester. We'll continue to employ the strategies and tactics that kept the rate of infection on our campus low, especially in our learning spaces, where we found no evidence of spread of the virus.

NMSU Now reflects our transformation into a community that successfully managed the spread of this virus and is focused on our commitment to our Land Grant mission. We move forward confident in our ability to shape the future of education in a post-COVID-19 world.

Just like our NMSU Ready plan, this is a living document, informed by plans from our colleges and service units, and continues to be subject to changing guidelines from the **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, New Mexico Department of Health**, and our own NMSU experts. We also expect to continue to **hear from you** about ways that it can be refined and improved. Please visit our new site, **now.nmsu.edu**, to keep up with updates to the plan, and subscribe to our weekly **NMSU Now Pandemic Action Team Report**.

Sincerely,



Dan E. Arvizu
Chancellor



John D. Floros
President

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Key updates and quick-reference (updated 02/25/21)

New Mexico Department of Health's 'Red to Green' System

In December, the state of New Mexico launched a new **"Red to Green" system** to set reopening thresholds and guidelines on a county-by-county basis. The county-by-county framework will permit counties – and the businesses and nonprofit entities within their borders – to operate under less restrictive public health measures when health metrics demonstrating the extent of the virus' spread and test positivity within those counties are met.

In order to prevent and mitigate the effects of the spread of the virus, and to ameliorate the strain placed upon the state's health care system and personnel, counties where the virus is more prevalent will operate under more restrictive public health measures. Likewise, counties where the virus has been or is being suppressed will operate under less restrictive measures.

Counties will operate under one of three levels: Red, signifying very high risk; Yellow, signifying high risk; and Green, signifying medium risk.

On Feb. 24, the state announced a new least-restrictive level where all categories of business can operate indoors with minimal occupancy limitations, depending on the risk level of the activity. A county will reach this least-restrictive level, the Turquoise Level, by meeting key health criteria for two consecutive two-week periods and effectively graduating out of the Red-Yellow-Green framework, provided the virus remains suppressed.

The New Mexico Department of Health **maintains an official map displaying each county's current level** on its COVID-19 webpage, cv.nmhealth.org. To capture an average over a period of time that accurately conveys the spread of the virus in each county, the agency updates this map every other Wednesday.

NMSU continually reassesses and adjusts its operational plans based on guidance from both the **New Mexico Department of Health** and the **New Mexico Higher Education Department**. Our campuses will follow this guidance, and may implement more-restrictive measures if our data indicates it is in the best interest of our students and employees.

Relevant requirements for NMSU at each level are listed here, and a full list of requirements and definitions can be found at cv.nmhealth.org/redtgreen.

Turquoise Level

Counties at the Turquoise Level have **both** a new COVID-19 case incidence rate of no greater than 8 cases per 100,000 inhabitants during the most recent four-week period, **and** an average percent of positive COVID-19 test results over the most recent four-week period less than or equal to 5%.

- ◆ **Essential businesses (non-retail):** No capacity restrictions but operations must be limited to only those absolutely necessary to carry out essential functions
- ◆ **Essential retail spaces:** 75% of maximum capacity (indoor and outdoor)
- ◆ **Food and drink establishments (if NM Safe Certified):** 75% of maximum capacity for indoor dining; 75% of maximum capacity for outdoor dining
- ◆ **Close-contact businesses:** 75% of maximum capacity; no restrictions on outdoor spaces

- ◆ **Large entertainment venues:** 33% of maximum capacity for any indoor/enclosed space on premises; 75% of any outdoor space on premises
- ◆ **Recreational facilities:** 50% of maximum capacity of any indoor/enclosed space on the premises; 75% of any outdoor space on premises
- ◆ **Bars and clubs:** 33% of maximum capacity of any indoor/enclosed space on premises; 75% of any outdoor space on premises, where applicable
- ◆ **All other businesses:** 75% of maximum capacity indoors; no restrictions on outdoor spaces
- ◆ **Mass gatherings limit:** 150 persons, or 200 vehicles

Green Level

Counties at the Green Level have **both** a new COVID-19 case incidence rate of no greater than 8 cases per 100,000 inhabitants during the most recent two-week period, **and** an average percent of positive COVID-19 test results over the most recent 14-day period less than or equal to 5%.

- ◆ **Essential businesses (non-retail):** No capacity restrictions but operations must be limited to only those absolutely necessary to carry out essential functions
- ◆ **Essential retail spaces:** 50% of maximum capacity (indoor and outdoor)
- ◆ **Food and drink establishments (if NM Safe Certified):** 50% of maximum capacity for indoor dining; 75% of maximum capacity for outdoor dining
- ◆ **Close-contact businesses:** 50% of maximum capacity (indoor and outdoor)
- ◆ **Large entertainment venues:** 25% of maximum capacity for any indoor/enclosed space on premises; 50% of any outdoor space on premises
- ◆ **Recreational facilities:** 25% of maximum capacity of any indoor/enclosed space on the premises; 50% of any outdoor space on the premises
- ◆ **Bars and clubs:** 25% of maximum capacity of any outdoor space on premises, where applicable; indoor not permitted
- ◆ **All other businesses:** 50% of maximum capacity (indoor and outdoor)
- ◆ **Mass gatherings limit:** 20 persons, 120 vehicles

Yellow Level

Counties at the Yellow Level have **either** a new COVID-19 case incidence rate of no greater than 8 cases per 100,000 inhabitants during the most recent two-week period, **or** an average percent of positive COVID-19 test results over the most recent 14-day period less than or equal to 5%.

- ◆ **Essential businesses (non-retail):** No capacity restrictions but operations must be limited to only those absolutely necessary to carry out essential functions
- ◆ **Essential retail spaces:** 33% of maximum capacity (indoor and outdoor)
- ◆ **Food and drink establishments (if NM Safe Certified):** 25% of maximum capacity for indoor dining; 75% of maximum capacity for outdoors dining; any establishment serving alcohol must close by 10 p.m. each night
- ◆ **Close-contact businesses:** 33% of maximum capacity or 20 customers at one time, whichever is smaller; 33% of any outdoor space on the premises
- ◆ **Large entertainment venues:** 25% of maximum capacity of any outdoor space on premises; indoor not permitted with the limited exception of operating up to 25% of maximum capacity for recording and broadcasting entertainment without any in-person audience

- ◆ **Recreational facilities:** 33% of any outdoor space on the premises; indoor not permitted
- ◆ **Bars and clubs:** May not operate
- ◆ **All other businesses:** 33% of maximum capacity (indoor and outdoor)
- ◆ **Mass gatherings limit:** 10 persons; 80 vehicles

Red Level

Counties at the Red Level are those with a new COVID-19 case incident rate of greater than 8 cases per 100,000 inhabitants during the most recent two-week period **and** an average percent of positive COVID-19 test results over the most recent 14-day period greater than 5%.

- ◆ **Essential businesses (non-retail):** No capacity restrictions but must limit operations to only those absolutely necessary to carry out essential functions
- ◆ **Essential retail spaces:** 25% of maximum capacity (indoor and outdoor)
- ◆ **Food and drink establishments:** No indoor dining permitted; 25% of maximum capacity for outdoor dining; any establishment serving alcohol must close by 9 p.m. each night
- ◆ **Close-contact businesses:** 25% of maximum capacity or 10 customers at one time, whichever is smaller; 25% of any outdoor space on the premises
- ◆ **Large entertainment venues:** May not operate
- ◆ **Recreational facilities:** 25% of maximum capacity of any outdoor space on the premises; indoor not permitted
- ◆ **Bars and clubs:** May not operate
- ◆ **All other businesses:** 25% of maximum capacity (indoor and outdoor)
- ◆ **Mass gatherings limit:** 5 persons, 40 vehicles

Spring academic calendar

As we plan for the spring 2021 semester, we continue make operational adjustments in response to the ongoing pandemic.

To decrease the risk of viral transmission associated with travel, the revised spring semester **academic calendar** splits up the days a spring break would traditionally provide. The plan extends the winter break by three days, allowing faculty more time to prepare for the start of the semester, and includes two days without classes mid-semester. The 2021 spring academic calendar is below, with the changes highlighted:

	New Date(s)	Previous Schedule
Faculty report back	Thursday, Jan. 14	Thursday, Jan. 14
Instruction begins	Monday, Jan. 25	Wednesday, Jan. 20
Presidents Day (No classes)	Monday, Feb. 15	N/A
Spring Break (No classes)	Tuesday, March 23, only	March 22-26
Spring Holiday (No classes, faculty and staff holiday)	Friday, April 2	Friday, April 2
Last Day of Classes	Friday, May 14	Friday, May 14

Vaccine availability: What we know now

According to the **U.S. Centers for Disease Control**, the COVID-19 vaccines have been evaluated in tens of thousands of individuals who volunteered to be vaccinated and to participate in clinical trials. The information from these clinical trials allowed the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** to determine the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines. These clinical

trials were conducted according to rigorous standards set forth by the FDA, and that agency determined that the newly authorized COVID-19 vaccines meet its safety and effectiveness standards. Therefore, the FDA has made these vaccines available for use in the United States under what is known as an Emergency Use Authorization.

Not everyone will be able to be vaccinated right away, and the vaccine may not be available to most of NMSU or the general public until mid-2021. Regardless, we are encouraging all students, faculty, and staff – especially those who work in healthcare settings and clinical rotations – **to preregister for the vaccine via the COVID-19 Vaccine Registration System** if you haven't done so already. If you have questions or concerns about the vaccine, visit the **New Mexico Department of Health Vaccine web page**.

NMSU system employees who must be on campus are now included in the latter portion of Phase 1B of the state's COVID-19 vaccine allotment plan, and the Department of Health will contact people who are registered to get a vaccine when it is their turn.

Commuting NMSU system employees who are out-of-state residents will be eligible to receive the vaccine in New Mexico by using their NMSU system campus as their address.

Las Cruces campus employees should enter *1780 E. University Ave., Las Cruces, NM, 88003* as the address when prompted, and proceed with filling out the profile with occupation and health information. DACC employees should use *2800 Sonoma Ranch Blvd, Las Cruces, New Mexico 88011* as the address. Employees of other campuses around the state may use their campus address, as well, if their home address is outside New Mexico.

Getting the COVID-19 vaccine adds one more layer of protection for our students and employees as well as our communities and our state, but masks, social distancing, and other protective measures will still be required.

The **New Mexico Department of Health** is leading New Mexico's **COVID-19 Vaccination Preparedness Planning** in collaboration with other state agencies, as well as public, private and tribal partners. NMSU campuses are working with NMDOH to serve as vaccine distribution sites.

At this time, NMSU is continuing with telework wherever possible for non-essential employees, and the COVID-19 vaccination is **not a requirement** for return to work or class for the spring 2021 semester. NMSU encourages everyone to receive the vaccine as soon as they are eligible, and **expects all employees and students to continue using COVID-safe practices like mask-wearing while on campus, at home, and in the community**. Students will reaffirm their personal accountability by signing the Crimson Commitment, while employees must re-take the Return to Campus training. More information on both of these accountability commitments can be found under Personal Responsibility on page 13.

Reporting & responding to a positive case

Any student or employee of the NMSU system or affiliated agencies who has tested positive for COVID-19 **must report** through the **online portal** or contact Aggie Health and Wellness Center (575-646-7375 or **campus_health@nmsu.edu**) immediately. The positive individual

may not come to work or class and must follow current **CDC guidance** regarding self-quarantine or self-isolation.

When NMSU is notified of a person with a positive test for COVID-19, Aggie Health and Wellness Center (AHWC) or the affected branch campus will initiate contact tracing and coordinate the **process** to notify exposed individuals (those who have been within 6 feet for 15 minutes) and disinfect buildings. **The identity of the COVID-19 positive person will not be disclosed.** Supervisors of staff who may have been in the affected building (e.g. Facilities, ICT) will be alerted so they can alert employees as needed.

Once a report of a case is made, AHWC will identify and notify close contacts and provide additional guidance as needed. **COVID-19 positive individuals do not need to notify possible contacts themselves or lock down buildings or departments.**

Community college employees and students should report a positive test to the local COVID-19 contact point for their campus:

- ◆ Alamogordo campus: **Joan Hale** (575-439-3793)
- ◆ Carlsbad campus: **Karla Volpi** (575-234-9216)
- ◆ Doña Ana Community College campus: **Amy Collins** (575-528-7068)
- ◆ Grants campus: **Anne Semrau** (505-287-6661)

Cleaning after a positive test notification

Supervisors or department heads who receive notification of a positive test must coordinate with Aggie Health and Wellness Center by contacting Lori McKee at **lomckee@nmsu.edu** or **campus_health@nmsu.edu**. AHWC or the local COVID-19 contact point for the campus will rapidly engage with Facilities Operations to implement enhanced cleaning. The process flow chart is found under Cleaning and Disinfection on our **COVID-19 Health and Safety Resources** page.

A **COVID-19 enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocol** developed by EHS&RM will be applied in all cases in which a person with COVID-19 spent time in university spaces from 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms until seven days have passed since the person was present in a university space. This disinfection process used by Facilities and Services uses CDC-approved methods, supplies, and guidance.

Returning to work or class after exposure to a person who has tested positive:

If a person has been exposed to someone with COVID-19, there is a 14-day period during which they might become infected. That is sometimes called the "incubation period" for the disease. The 14 days run from the last date they had a close contact with the person with COVID-19. People who have had an exposure must quarantine at home for 14 days. Per current New Mexico Department of Health guidelines, this applies to vaccinated individuals, as well

Further information is available here: **Policies for the Prevention and Control of COVID-19 in New Mexico**. NMDOH policies on quarantine and isolation are subject to change; if this occurs, and the below guidance no longer aligns with NMDOH guidance, all NMSU system campuses should follow the updated NMDOH guidance.

If you are:

- ◆ **Asymptomatic (no symptoms of illness) and had a negative coronavirus test result following a known or suspected exposure** – a negative test does not end the need for quarantine. Continue to take precautions per public health orders and monitor for symptoms until your 14-day period is up.
- ◆ **Asymptomatic and have had a positive test** – stay home, work remotely and attend class online if possible, and self-isolate for a full 10 days after the date your specimen was collected that resulted in a positive test. Monitor your temperature twice a day and watch for development of symptoms. If you stay asymptomatic for the full 10 days, you may resume normal activities on day 11. If you develop symptoms during self-isolation, you may resume normal activities after at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared and at least 1 day (24 hours) has passed without a fever (and without the use of fever-reducing medications) and your symptoms have improved.
- ◆ **Symptomatic and waiting for your coronavirus test results** – stay home and monitor for symptoms until you receive results. If you feel well enough to continue to work remotely or attend classes online, you may choose to do so. If not, employees should use leave, students should communicate with instructors about missed class sessions, and instructors should be flexible in allowing students to make up missed work.
- ◆ **Symptomatic and had a negative coronavirus test result** – stay home as long as you have symptoms of any illness and return to normal activities once you are completely symptom free for 1 day (24 hours), without fever and without the use of fever-reducing medications. If you feel well enough to continue to work remotely or attend classes online, you may choose to do so.
- ◆ **Symptomatic and have had a positive test** – stay home and immediately self-isolate for 10 days after the date your specimen was collected that resulted in a positive test. You can resume normal activities after you have been completely symptom free for at least 1 day (24 hours), without a fever and without the use of fever-reducing medications, and your symptoms have improved. If you feel well enough to continue to work remotely or attend classes online, you may choose to do so.

What to do if you have a positive case in your area

- ◆ If you are an employee who has had a positive test, you should notify your supervisor and report it to the Aggie Health and Wellness Center by **entering a self-report** or contacting the Aggie Health and Wellness Center at **campus_health@nmsu.edu** or 575-646-7375. This is the same protocol for branch campuses.
- ◆ Affected areas will receive enhanced cleaning and disinfecting if an individual who regularly enters the area tests positive. Your supervisor or department head will notify you when normal operations may resume.
- ◆ You can continue to work unless you are notified that you were identified as a contact by the contact tracing team. If you were identified as a contact, you must self-isolate at home for 10 days, get tested, and follow the guidelines above.

Coming back to campus, January 2021

Protecting the health and wellness of the Aggie community is important. As an educational institution, we also must support our students as they work to achieve their educational goals. For that reason, every office that directly works with students will be operational during regular

business hours beginning January 11, 2021. These front-line offices include academic departments, colleges, and student service providers. Responsiveness and service excellence remain critically important, while on-campus population density should be limited to less than 25% of pre-pandemic staffing. Offices will use staffing alternatives like staggered schedules and virtual services including Zoom, Teams, email, chat and phone to communicate with students and deliver excellent service.

Move-in schedule for campus residents

Move-in for in-state residents will begin January 17, 2021, and continue through January 24, 2021. To allow for social distancing and to limit the number of people in a facility at any given time, each resident will be limited to two helpers during their move-in. Face coverings will be required, along with social distancing and frequent hand-washing.

Resident students traveling to the Las Cruces campus from out of state, including El Paso and Juarez, will arrive for early move-in by January 11, 2021. While students commuting daily from communities outside New Mexico must follow mask-wearing and social distancing guidelines when they are on campus, our resident students join the housing community – their Aggie family – when they make a home on our campus. For the protection of all of our resident students, quarantine requirements outlined by the New Mexico Department of Health will apply to all campus housing arrivals from out of state. These students will need to fill out an Early Arrival Request form on their **myHousing** portal, and provide documentation of travel so we can coordinate their living spaces with their travel plans.

Faculty and staff

Although offices that serve students will be open, we will continue our reduced levels of staffing on campus overall to reduce opportunities for viral spread. Ideally, across campuses, and as in the fall semester we will have approximately 25% of normal staffing density in buildings, in aggregate, as we begin the spring semester. This may change based on guidance from the New Mexico Department of Health.

Offices and departments that can operate effectively entirely through telework will continue to do so. Employees at risk for COVID-19 according to **CDC guidelines** will continue to work from home if their job duties allow. NMSU recognizes the importance of employee privacy regarding medical information. A **decision tree** for supervisors can assist in planning for staffing needs.

We've also developed an **Alternative Work Arrangement (AWA) policy** that promotes low employee density on the campus and allows for work to get done productively in remote locations. The options available in AWA include telework, flex time, short-term work modifications, and a compressed work week. **Training modules** have also been developed to assist managers and employees. Additional resources for telework are available at **hr.nmsu.edu**. Faculty and staff will receive information about a reminder **training** on COVID-safe practices beginning in January.

Resources on self-care and emotional wellness support are always available to faculty and staff from NMSU.

- ◆ **Aggie Health and Wellness Center** offers the **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**. EAP is a confidential counseling and referral service available to all NMSU faculty and staff. Call 575-646-6603 for more info.

- ◆ **Well-Being Solutions**, the new employee assistance program from the State of New Mexico, also provides services to eligible employees and their family members. You can schedule up to five free counseling sessions by calling 833-515-0771 or visiting www.guidanceresources.com and using SONMEAP as the web ID.

Research and creativity

NMSU Research continues to follow a phased approach adopted from **Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Council on Research**. Progress along phases is based on COVID-19 data from the CDC and New Mexico Department of Health, plus guidance from state, local, and university administrative policies. Research activities conducted under Phases 1 through 4 require review and prior approval from research unit directors, department heads, deans and the vice president for research (VPR). The detailed plan and timeline are available at research.nmsu.edu.

Workspaces

To facilitate employee transition back to campus, supervisors will ensure that their office includes, posted in a prominent place, the following information:

- ◆ A daily health self-monitoring checklist
- ◆ Instructions should an employee develop symptoms or have a positive test for COVID-19
- ◆ New Mexico State University COVID-19 Safety Commitment
- ◆ Office-specific procedures for shared equipment like copiers, phones, refrigerators and water coolers
- ◆ Any additional department-specific protocols for maintaining a healthy environment, including cleaning and waste removal

Some recommendations for department-specific protocols include:

- ◆ Employee break areas may be used if 6 feet is maintained between occupants.
- ◆ Face coverings may be removed for eating and drinking, but a separation of 6 feet among individuals must be maintained.
- ◆ Employees should be particularly aware of social distancing in restrooms.
- ◆ Online meetings should continue to be an option, even if all participants are on campus.
- ◆ All in-person meetings should begin with safety and health reminders.

Outside of the NMSU environment, faculty, staff, and students should be aware of their exposure to others. Anyone who believes they have been exposed to COVID-19 must place themselves in quarantine as public health protocols dictate.

Using data to understand COVID-19

Monitoring COVID-19 is one way to help protect the health and safety of the NMSU community. Three important tools for this monitoring are screening for COVID-19 symptoms, testing for COVID-19 infection, and tracing people who have been exposed to COVID-19. People infected with COVID-19 are contagious before they show symptoms, and some people who have been infected never have symptoms. Because we cannot be certain who is infected, we all need to rely on behavioral interventions like social distancing, hand-washing, and wearing a mask. Even

though the newly identified strains of this virus are more infectious, these behaviors remain effective against transmission.

Each member of the NMSU community needs to screen their health for COVID-19 symptoms. We have developed an online self-check and self-reporting portal, available on the **homepage** and the **now.nmsu.edu** site, to help with screening and contact tracing. Students, employees and visitors should perform a daily self-check and, as relevant, register locations visited on campus to help Aggie Health and Wellness contact tracers identify additional potential contacts.

People with who feel ill or have symptoms of COVID-19 must remain at home or in their residence halls. They need to contact a health care provider, **Aggie Health and Wellness** at 575-646-7375, or the relevant branch campus contact.

Surveillance testing

Another important aspect of dealing with COVID-19 is to understand its spread on our campus. We have implemented an extensive plan for this by leveraging faculty expertise, partnerships with private companies and funding from New Mexico Department of Health. This plan includes:

- ◆ On-campus testing for most out-of-state resident students within days of arrival
- ◆ Daily asymptomatic or symptomatic testing for students and employees available at **Aggie Health and Wellness Center**
- ◆ **Modeling COVID-19 prevalence** and spread based on data that includes students who live on campus in student housing, students who live off campus in New Mexico, students who commute from out of state, employees who live in New Mexico, and employees who commute from out of state. Each week during the study period, a random sample of approximately 250 receive invitations to participate.
- ◆ In the early stages of measuring the prevalence of the SARS-COV-2 virus at specific locations through **wastewater sampling**
- ◆ Testing three times per week for student-athletes involved in practice or competition

In the Las Cruces area, COVID-19 tests are also available at the **Department of Health Office** and **other sites**.

Free home COVID-19 test kits are now available to all New Mexico residents, regardless of exposure risk, symptoms, or whether they have come into close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 positive individual or not. Any New Mexican with access to online video-conferencing through Zoom can self-administer the test at home with a virtual testing supervisor and mail the sample back for laboratory processing. To order a test, visit **learn.vaulthealth.com/nm**.

Monitoring data

NMSU leadership closely monitors daily reports from the New Mexico Department of Health to understand, down to the level of ZIP codes, the trends of COVID-19 in the community. An online **COVID-19 data dashboard** provides a snapshot of that data daily, Monday through Friday, and for each week. These reports help us understand trends in data like new infections, recoveries, and hospital capacity.

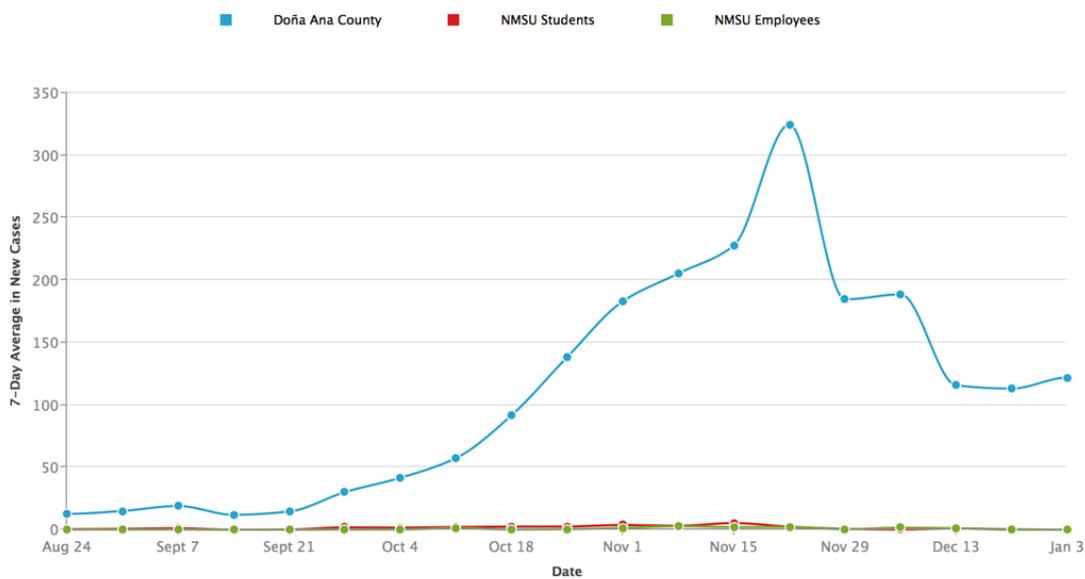
A careful review of the data from the fall semester suggests that our campus was successful in preventing widespread outbreaks of COVID-19. As COVID-19 cases in Doña Ana County rose, we saw a corresponding, but much lower, rise of cases on campus in employees and students.

Communicating the expectation that everyone on campus would use COVID-safe practices at all times paid off:

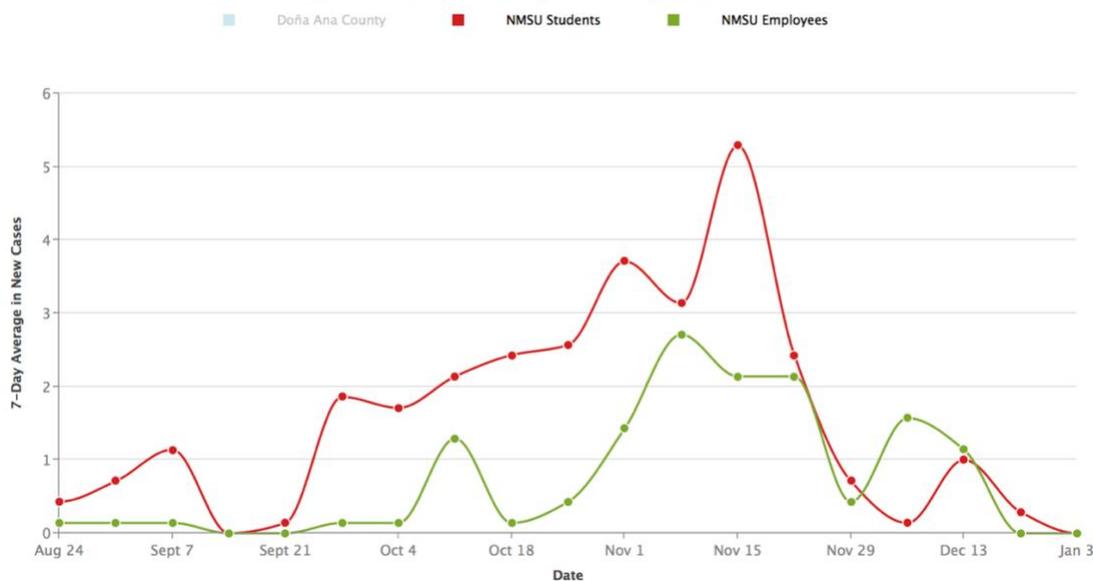
- ◆ Our team of dedicated contact tracers tracked the majority of cases to contact with an infected family member, friend, or off-campus co-worker.
- ◆ We found no evidence of transmission of the virus in our learning spaces; every case of on-campus transmission was investigated, and the underlying cause was addressed.
- ◆ Housing and Residence Life acted quickly to separate campus residents testing positive after exposure to their roommates and suitemates. As a result, we documented only one case in which a roommate of a student who tested positive also contracted COVID-19.

Fall semester data:

Doña Ana County 7-Day Average in New Cases



Doña Ana County 7-Day Average in New Cases



Responding to a surge in COVID-19 cases

Under certain conditions, the NMSU administration is committed to severely limiting campus activities to reduce viral spread. Possible triggers include:

- ◆ Levels of COVID-19 that are statistically higher on campus than in the age-matched population in Doña Ana and El Paso counties.
- ◆ Local hospitals approach capacity for ICU beds. In this case, we could not assure that sick students or staff could get the care they need.
- ◆ A cluster of positive cases that can be traced to on-campus transmission associated with a particular campus setting, such as within a classroom or building (or multiple buildings); within residence halls; within athletics, band, or other units or groups of students; and within on-campus employees.

In addition to daily monitoring, NMSU leadership meets weekly, or more frequently if needed, with campus experts to assess trends in critical metrics. These meetings could trigger actions and data collection to better assess the situation. Examples of these actions include:

- ◆ Increased testing for COVID-19 for specific groups of students, faculty and staff, with contact tracing for positive cases;
- ◆ Investigating outbreaks to understand contributory factors such as social events or decreased vigilance regarding social distancing or face coverings, and taking corrective action as needed;
- ◆ Closing campus buildings for disinfection in concert with NMSU Facilities and Services;
- ◆ Reviewing related rules and policies;
- ◆ Closing buildings to instruction and restricting campus activities; and
- ◆ Communicating with the campus community.

The university – or specific departments or classes – could pivot to fully online course delivery and stay-at-home restrictions, even if a statewide school and business closure has not been ordered. Student services such as residential life and dining would continue as essential services.

Maintaining flexibility

Pedagogies such as hybrid teaching allow faculty to switch from face-to-face to online environment quickly. NMSU's **Alternative Work Arrangements policy** facilitates telework and is supported by a **decision tree** for managers. Every department must review and revise continuity of operations plans to include plans for a return to telework.

Communication and information sharing

Communication and transparency are top priorities as we continue to adapt to a changing environment. All members of the NMSU community are encouraged to contact system leaders at **covid19@nmsu.edu** with questions and comments. Your input helps us to understand your questions and concerns.

We'll continue to provide frequent updates on the activities and findings of the Pandemic Action Team; data from the campus, county, and state; changes to policies and guidelines; and any other relevant information.

Communication channels include:

- ◆ Weekly NMSU Now – Pandemic Action Team Report [[Subscribe](#)]
- ◆ Family Outreach Home [[Visit](#)]
- ◆ Family Outreach Newsletter [[Subscribe](#)]
- ◆ Presidential town hall sessions [[View archive](#)]
- ◆ NMSU Hotline announcements [[Subscribe](#)]
- ◆ President's Communication and Dan's Dispatch [[Subscribe](#)]
- ◆ Campus memos
- ◆ Social media posts [[Facebook](#)] [[Twitter](#)] [[Instagram](#)]

Personal responsibility

As members of the NMSU community, we are each responsible for our own health and safety. COVID-19 is still new and there is still much we are learning about it, but we do know that through responsible behavior, we can reduce transmission of the virus and we can contribute to the health and safety of our colleagues across the NMSU system as well as the communities and individuals we serve. Every member of the Aggie community needs to do their part as we battle COVID-19 together.

Prior to returning to campus, every student and employee should refresh their knowledge about safety practices and precautions that can reduce transmission. Employees can access training through the annual SET certification at [Training Central](#). For students, a video outlining expectations and personal responsibility is viewable on Canvas at the beginning of the semester. Included is the following commitment to the safety of the NMSU community.

New Mexico State University COVID-19 Safety Commitment

To minimize the risk to public health presented by the spread of COVID-19 while working and learning at NMSU, students, staff, and faculty are expected to adhere to the following:

- ◆ I will limit my exposure to COVID-19 by maintaining social distancing guidelines professionally and personally.
- ◆ I will wear the appropriate cloth face covering or personal protective equipment and practice proper hand-washing techniques frequently.
- ◆ I agree to closely monitor my health and will not enter an NMSU building or participate in face-to-face activities if I feel sick or if I develop or display symptoms of COVID-19.
- ◆ I agree to decontaminate work surfaces at the beginning and end of my work.
- ◆ If I have a positive test for COVID-19, I agree to immediately notify my supervisor and Aggie Health and Wellness (575-646-7375 or campus_health@nmsu.edu).
- ◆ I agree to follow all NMSU guidelines to protect the public health.
- ◆ I understand that failure to follow these expected behaviors would be detrimental to public health efforts and could impact my ability to perform work at NMSU.

Anyone failing to meet any of these expectations may be subject to corrective action under university policies.

Recommendations relating to face coverings, monitoring, self-quarantine, and isolation will be updated in alignment with guidance from the **New Mexico Department of Health**. Changes will be communicated to the university community through our **weekly newsletter**, campus-wide memos, and other communications as appropriate.

Do your part: Personal accountability and COVID-19

Because COVID-19 is a disease that spreads primarily from person to person, all employees, students and visitors must take personal responsibility for their own health, protect the health of others, and keep the Aggie community safe from the spread of COVID-19 and other infections. A **collection of videos** provides additional information about expectations, accountability and steps being taken by the university to reduce the spread of the virus.

In many situations, a person not maintaining proper distance or wearing a face covering can be asked to support the shared goal of staying healthy or reminded of NMSU standards. Ways to address such situations include:

- ◆ Handing a face covering to a person and saying, "Face coverings are required at NMSU. Here is one to use when you are on campus."
- ◆ Another option: "Face coverings are required on campus, and there is a vending machine nearby where you can get one."
- ◆ Social distancing reminders can be trickier: "Let's all stay safe and keep our distance." Or "This barrier (or the tape on the floor) is a reminder to maintain a safe distance."

Each above approach requires that individuals – whether student or employee – exercise common courtesy and patience. If you suspect resistance to your outreach, politely exit the conversation immediately, and notify a supervisor or contact NMSU Police at 575-646-3311. If a person does not follow an NMSU directive that protects public health and safety, NMSU can ask that person to leave campus, unless the person has an exception to that directive.

Approval for an exception

Some members of our community will not be able to wear a face covering in situations when one is expected by NMSU guidelines. Employees seeking to be excluded from the face covering requirement should notify their supervisor and contact the **Office of Institutional Equity** at 575-646-3635 for consideration for an exception. Part of the exception approval process will include protocols for the employee to follow (telework, change of office space or alternate controls) to help protect the health of other members of the NMSU community. Students seeking an exception should contact the **Dean of Students Office** at 575-646-1722.

Travel guidelines

The New Mexico State University system serves a diverse set of stakeholders across the state and around the world. In order to fulfill our mission, university employees must sometimes travel outside of their communities. The following guidelines are provided to balance the need for some travel during COVID-19 and the obligation to mitigate the risks of this travel.

Decisions regarding travel must be made in the interest of the health and safety of our university community and in accordance with **current public health guidance**. NMSU will continue to reassess this guidance and update these temporary restrictions as appropriate.

Out-of-state commuters (including El Paso)

For purposes of this guidance, “travel” does not include commuting to and from work or school. Faculty, staff and students who currently commute from outside New Mexico (such as El Paso) for work or school may continue to do so. Unless otherwise noted, changes to stay-at-home restrictions for New Mexico or El Paso do not preclude students from continuing to attend in-person classes, considered an essential activity. However, faculty should remain flexible in allowing reasonable accommodations for students who are unable to attend classes in person due to quarantine restrictions. Similarly, supervisors should accommodate changes to in-person work when necessary, and should continue to utilize telework when possible.

Travel resources

- ◆ **CDC guidelines for travel**
- ◆ **NMDOH travel restrictions**
- ◆ **COVID Safe Practices (CSPs)**
- ◆ **Public Health Orders**

Essential travel may be permitted at the discretion of the applicable community college president, dean, vice president, or equivalent authority. Essential travel is considered university-related travel necessary to preserve a university program or interest that cannot be postponed.

When requesting authorization for essential travel, travelers and their supervisors or sponsors should consider the potential risks. Depending on risk, travel could be denied, delayed, amended, or authorized.

- ◆ Travel to **high-risk locations** is discouraged.
- ◆ Travel risk to consider include the importance of travel to the program, location, number of participants, activities, type of travel, and the risk of COVID-19 exposure at the destination.
- ◆ Employees or students who travel must comply with **NMDOH travel restrictions** and quarantine guidelines upon return.
- ◆ Information on in-bound travel for visiting faculty or other visitors to campus may be found under **Guidelines for Campus Visitors**.

Essential travel approvals should consider impact on university mission, department or program requirements and whether other options are available. Approved travel authorization must be included with all requests for travel reimbursement or payment. Essential in-state travel is exempt from this requirement.

Travel within the state by automobile is permitted, when pre-approved, if limited to a single passenger or two passengers with appropriate face covering.

Non-essential personal travel is discouraged. Anyone who travels out-of-state for personal reasons must follow current travel and quarantine guidelines from the state. Approved leave must be taken for this period unless arrangements to telework have been made.

Sponsored award travel

Travel on a sponsored award is permitted if:

- ◆ It is required by grant or contract language,
- ◆ There is no option for delay,
- ◆ It is approved by the department head and dean, and
- ◆ The traveler follows prevention and protection measures outlined by the NMDOH when traveling out-of-state and upon return to New Mexico.

Student travel

Students are encouraged to remain on campus or the local community and not travel during the semester.

Students who do must comply with the latest **travel recommendations and guidelines** outlined by the New Mexico Department of Health.

Approved student fieldwork is allowed. All other university-sponsored student travel (i.e. academic or leadership conferences, service events) are suspended until further notice. ASNMSU is not reimbursing student organizations or individuals for travel.

Education abroad programs are suspended until further notice. Questions related to education abroad, including faculty led international programs (FLIPs), should be directed to Education Abroad at 575-646-5107 or to **educationabroad@nmsu.edu**.

Questions related to National Student Exchange should be directed to the Office of Experiential Learning at 575-646-5107 or to Kari Cena, National Student Exchange Coordinator at **kkrankin@nmsu.edu**.

Athletic travel

Athletic team travel will be permitted using the guidelines provided by the state of New Mexico, NCAA and Western Athletic Conference. All team travel must be approved by the Director of Athletics or Deputy Athletic Director and university leadership. Athletic teams will be required to follow all current travel-related quarantine recommendations from the New Mexico Department of Health.

Facility readiness

Facilities and Services staff worked with academic departments and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) across the system to prepare spaces for student and faculty use. Modifications to spaces have been completed according to those spaces' alignment with the priorities below, from the **NMSU LEADS 2025** strategic plan:

1. Students' Academic Progress (Goal 1)
2. Student Services (Goal 1)
3. Faculty Research and Creative Activity (Goal 2)
4. Faculty Services (Goal 2)
5. Meeting and Convening Spaces (Goal 3)

6. Business Services (Goal 3)

7. Auxiliaries, if not related to students or faculty (Goal 4)

Many spaces needed no modifications, such as single-occupancy offices or shared offices where the occupants will stagger schedules. Barriers were installed in high-traffic spaces where social distancing is difficult.

Modifications managed through Facilities and Services include:

- ◆ Barriers in high-traffic spaces
- ◆ Computer labs
- ◆ Reconfiguration of cubicles
- ◆ Retrofitting cubicle partitions with panels

Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems

Facilities and Services has reviewed all HVAC systems to ensure they are operating at their peak. Assessment and performance testing noted:

- ◆ Overall system type, location, and age
- ◆ Mechanical condition
- ◆ Equipment performance
- ◆ Areas served
- ◆ Filtration technology
- ◆ Humidity control
- ◆ Air volume control
- ◆ Fresh air type
- ◆ Airflow stations
- ◆ CO₂ monitoring
- ◆ Reserve ventilation capacity

Aggie transit

The free **Aggie Transit green and blue routes** are available from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday when class is in session, except during breaks and holidays. Masks are required to ride the bus, and some seats will not be available for use to help passengers maintain appropriate distance. Buses are sanitized multiple times throughout the day.

The Aggie Green route makes pick-ups every 10 minutes and connects the free parking lot near the Pan Am Center to the Horseshoe. The Aggie Blue route makes pick-ups every 20 minutes and makes it easier to get from student housing to the core of campus.

Instructional readiness

Our **Academic Technology** team has created FAQs, workshops, and other resources to help both faculty and students get the most out of their online and hybrid teaching and learning experiences.

A **syllabus generator** and additional syllabus resources are now available online for all campuses. Updates have been made to prioritize class content and utilize a **Syllabus Addendum** for additional information. A new **Student Resources & Policy** page is a one-stop resource for faculty and students containing information and links regarding student services, grading policies and important contact information. Updated COVID-19 Suggested Classroom Management guidelines and other resources are also available. For questions on syllabus resources, contact Carley Casey at carleyccc@nmsu.edu.

Classroom spaces

Classrooms were reconfigured to allow for students and faculty to satisfy social distancing requirements. Seating configuration allows for a minimum of 6-foot separation, measured from center of mass in accordance with CDC guidelines. Modifications to learning spaces include:

- ◆ Closing classrooms too small to allow for social distancing
- ◆ Implementing alternate classroom furniture configuration, to include
 - ▶ Restricting and removing seating to maintain 6-foot separation
 - ▶ Identifying available and restricted seating
- ◆ Adding signage explaining social distancing
- ◆ Identifying directions for one-way foot traffic
- ◆ Limiting and identifying entrances and exits to rooms

More than 200 classrooms were reconfigured to meet social distancing requirements for our largest courses.

In order to maintain social distancing measures and accessibility requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act, a modified maximum capacity for each classroom was identified and posted by Facilities and Services. This reduced capacity must be strictly observed, and modifications to seating in classroom spaces are not permitted.

Our classroom spaces also provide additional protection for instructors, such as acrylic barriers, microphones, and technology to facilitate remote teaching.

To reduce congestion in buildings, instructions are posted about entry and exit paths and to discourage students gathering in hallways, lobbies, or using elevators unless necessary. Teaching spaces are disinfected regularly to reduce COVID-19 spread. In addition to disinfection by Facilities and Services crews, NMSU installed about 1,300 sanitation stations, and disinfectant wipes are available for students to clean their spaces before and after use.

For concerns with classroom layout, supplies, cleaning, or other space issues, speak with the **building monitor** or department head. If assistance is needed to address a problem, email AskFS@nmsu.edu and include COVID-19 in the subject line, or call the work order desk at 575-646-7114 and identify a COVID-19 related issue.

Information about the availability and capacity of modified classroom spaces available for classes or meetings is available through the **AdAstra system**.

At the Las Cruces campus, outdoor instructional spaces have been created using tents, and additional temporary shade structures are set up across campus to provide areas for students to rest, eat or study outdoors between classes while following social distancing guidelines.

In addition to outdoor areas, many indoor lobbies and spaces with seating have been modified or labeled to promote appropriate distancing. These include:

- ◆ Ed and Harold Foreman Engineering Complex Lobby
- ◆ Hardman and Jacobs Undergraduate Learning Center
 - ▶ Open Computer Lab
 - ▶ Upstairs Wireless Lounge
- ◆ Pete V. Domenici Hall Lobby
- ◆ Breland Hall Lobby

Tent locations are noted on our **NMSU COVID 19 Las Cruces Campus Map**, available on our **Facilities and Services Space Planning** page.

Classroom technology

About 40 classrooms on the Las Cruces campus have upgraded technology that allow classrooms to be used for hybrid synchronous online delivery. Faculty can use Zoom to broadcast their classroom sessions to students who are not physically in the classroom, as well as record the lecture for future viewing. ICT and **Instructional Innovation and Quality** have resources to support using Zoom and other technology in the classroom.

Computer labs at all NMSU campuses have been modified to accommodate social distancing guidelines. At the Las Cruces campus, general use labs are available in Hardman-Jacobs Undergraduate Learning Center, Corbett Center Student Union, and Vista Del Monte. Hours are subject to change, but labs are scheduled to be open 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday beginning Jan 25. Hours and availability of other computer labs may vary.

In addition to wireless internet access available in campus buildings, **AggieAir wireless hotspots** are in many outdoor locations around the Las Cruces campus, including open tents throughout campus, green areas, food courts, parking lots and outdoor seating areas.

COVID-19 safety in classrooms

Faculty and instructors are empowered to ensure that students comply with mask-wearing and social distancing while in the classroom. Department heads must communicate with faculty about their rights, responsibilities and the resources available to them regarding handling confrontation during a class.

At the start of the semester, faculty and instructors should:

- ◆ Include "New Mexico State University COVID-19 Safety Commitment" in the course syllabus.
- ◆ Ask each student to electronically sign the safety commitment at the beginning of the course.
- ◆ Review face covering and social distancing requirements for the classroom during the first class.
- ◆ Clearly state in the first class session that anyone not able to comply with COVID-19 Classroom Safe Practices must switch to a 100% online section immediately or not take the class, if not offered online.

Student compliance with COVID-safe practices has not been a problem. However, if they encounter problems, faculty and instructors should:

- ◆ Discreetly remind any student without a mask of the policies and request they wear a mask.
- ◆ If student refuses to wear a mask, ask the student to leave the class.
- ◆ If non-compliant student refuses to leave, dismiss class.
- ◆ If student continues to escalate the situation, call NMSU Police at 575-646-3311 for assistance.

If a non-compliant student refuses to leave the class, faculty and instructors should send a follow-up report to the Office of the Dean of Students after the class using the **Campus Community Incident Response Form**. A **printable guide to facemasks in the classroom** is available, along with other **printable signs for classrooms**.

Instructional delivery

Adding flexibility to instructional delivery allows social distancing and provides the ability to move instruction to partially or fully online platforms, if necessary. Departments may choose to apply the in-person or hybrid model when it is pedagogically necessary to have in-person instruction and/or assessment. Examples include music lessons or ensembles, sports medicine courses and lab sections. Hybrid course delivery can be implemented in multiple ways. Some classes may rotate students through, with students assigned to attend in person on certain days and view lectures either synchronously or asynchronously on other days. This will accommodate more students in the course than social distancing would allow. If physical presence in the classroom is a preference of students, but not a requirement, departments may choose to have two cross-listed sections of the same course in which one section meets in a technology assisted classroom and the other meets synchronously online.

Some definitions:

- ◆ **100% online asynchronous delivery:** Students complete work independently, on their own schedule, no matter what time of day. Students are given deadlines by which they need to login and complete assignments.
- ◆ **100% online synchronous delivery:** Classes occur on set schedules through remote delivery. Students and instructors are online at the same time, and lectures, discussions, and presentations take place at specific hours. All students must be online at that time in order to participate in the class.
- ◆ **Hybrid (a combination of online and in-person):** Content delivery incorporates more than one modality, e.g., face-to-face **and** remote synchronous or asynchronous delivery. Face-to-face attendance is limited and may include alternating in-person and online synchronous or asynchronous attendance; may also provide recordings of lectures or experiential components for later reference to supplement concurrent transmission of lectures or experiential components. All students participate in all delivery modalities.

Schedule types that appear when registering for classes at my.nmsu.edu include:

- ◆ **HY:** Online with Req In Person Mtgs (online with required in-person meetings)
- ◆ **ONL:** Online with Synchronous Mtgs (100% online with synchronous meetings)
- ◆ **WB:** Online no Synchronous Mtgs (100% online asynchronous)
- ◆ **CL:** Classroom/Lecture (fully in-person)
- ◆ **LB:** Lab (in-person labs)
- ◆ **IND:** Independent Meeting
- ◆ **PC:** Practicum or Clinical
- ◆ **TD:** Thesis or Dissertation

Courses listed as HY for Spring 2021 include sections in:

- ◆ Agriculture (Economics, Agronomy, Animal Science, Environmental Science, etc.)
- ◆ Anthropology
- ◆ Art/Art Studio
- ◆ Astronomy
- ◆ Biology, Chemistry & Biochemistry
- ◆ Borderland & Ethnic Studies
- ◆ Business (Finance, Law, Management, Marketing, etc.)
- ◆ Computer Science
- ◆ Counseling & Educational Psychology
- ◆ Criminal Justice
- ◆ Clothing, Textiles & Fashion Merchandising
- ◆ Dance
- ◆ Engineering
- ◆ English
- ◆ Film & Digital Media Arts
- ◆ Geology
- ◆ Gender Studies
- ◆ History
- ◆ Journalism
- ◆ Languages
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Nutrition
- ◆ Physical Education
- ◆ Political Science
- ◆ Sociology
- ◆ Sports Medicine
- ◆ Theater

Note for students in clinical programs

Special precautions are required for students and faculty in clinical and other programs (such as nursing, allied health, athletic training, communication disorders, band, or student teaching). These precautions are unique to each program and are guided by the program's accreditation or governing authority, as well as medical and public health guidance. The university will provide oversight of these arrangements as appropriate.

Aggie Student Life

Public health restrictions on gathering sizes guide our plans regarding everything from club meetings to attendance at sporting events. Our Student Life office continues to create safe ways for all students to engage in the activities that make college life vibrant.

Clubs, lectures, fraternities, sororities, study sessions, intramurals, and other activities that occur in person will be limited in size. Organizers must use precautions such as physical distancing and face coverings based on guidance from state and local public health authorities, and university guidance.

NMSU will provide in-person activities to the extent that it is safe and practical to do so. Field trips and other experiential learning activities will occur where possible. We expect all of these activities to adhere to the precautions recommended by state and local health authorities.

Athletics

The NMSU system supports the university's continuation of athletics in the 2020–2021 academic year. Timing and format depend on conditions and direction from the state of New Mexico, **National Collegiate Athletic Association** (NCAA) and the **Western Athletic Conference** (WAC). Strength and conditioning training can continue as allowed by national and regional athletics governing bodies, with protective equipment in use when social distancing is not

possible. All student-athletes, coaches, trainers, and other staff will undergo PCR testing three times per week, as outlined in **NMDOH COVID-Safe Practices for Intercollegiate Sports**.

Decisions about sporting events, including the presence of spectators at events, will be made in accordance to guidance from the NCAA, WAC, university leadership and state and local officials.

Aggie Health and Wellness

The **Aggie Health and Wellness Center** offers daily health and wellness services to the NMSU community. This includes **counseling** for students provided by seeking help with a crisis, mental health, and personal growth and well-being. Services are free and confidential to NMSU Las Cruces campus students.

In an effort to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19, the Aggie Health and Wellness Center offers both in-person and telehealth services for access to medical and counseling providers, laboratory, and pharmacy services. Appointments for telehealth screening are available at 575-646-7375 from 8 to 11:30 a.m. and 1 to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Appointments can also be made for in-person laboratory services and pharmacy refills.

Aggie Health and Wellness Center also offers COVID-19 testing (symptomatic or asymptomatic) several days a week. Appointments are available by calling 575-646-1512.

Housing and Residential Life

NMSU's Housing and Residential Life office supports a healthy on-campus living environment, and is committed to providing students with a positive, engaging, safe, and supportive campus experience. Our COVID-safe practices are based on advice from NMSU health experts, New Mexico Department of Health, CDC and other resources. We will continue to provide information and education for students and expect they will do their part to stay healthy and protect the health of the NMSU community.

Protecting health

Housing and Residential Life supports healthy habits for resident students. Operations desks at Garcia Hall, Chamisa Village and South Campus are open and staffed. Guidance on expected health protocols is provided to residents and reinforced through signage placed prominently throughout housing facilities. Signs direct residents to entrances and exits, and provide instructions for foot traffic flow and maximum occupancy in certain areas. Because of the importance of physical distancing, common spaces such as lobbies, game rooms and study rooms may not be available.

Students who need to isolate or quarantine will be supported by a team of staff members through regular contact and meal delivery. Isolation housing is located in units that are private and separated from other residential areas.

Residents are responsible for keeping their living spaces (rooms, restrooms, and shared areas) clean. Shared or frequently touched surfaces should be disinfected after each use. Residents must supply their own cleaning supplies and materials. We recommend cleaners that disinfect or a bleach and water solution. Only one resident at a time should use any of the restroom facilities, even if areas are separated by more than six feet.

In addition to regular cleaning of rooms, restrooms, and shared areas, residents should wipe down or spray shower, toilet, sink and counter surfaces with disinfecting cleaner frequently and leave restroom doors open for ventilation to dry the restroom.

Residents are responsible for removing trash and placing it in parking lot dumpsters. Shared spaces, including lobbies, community bathrooms, patios, etc. will undergo enhanced cleaning and disinfection by the custodial team on a regular schedule. More specific information for residential students can be found at housing.nmsu.edu.

Visitors and travel

Students living in Rhodes Garrett Hamiel, Juniper Hall, Garcia Hall, Piñon Hall, Chamisa Village, Vista del Monte and Cervantes Village are not permitted day or overnight visitors in those housing facilities, including their rooms. This does not apply to student family housing.

Residential living students are strongly discouraged from leaving the university during the semester to limit exposure. If students do leave the residence hall and suspect they have been exposed to COVID-19, the student must report this exposure to Aggie Health and Wellness Center and the appropriate resident director in order to determine if self-quarantine is necessary in accordance with CDC and state guidance. For the protection of all of our resident students, quarantine requirements outlined by the New Mexico Department of Health will apply to all residents who travel out of state and return to campus.

Dining facilities

In November 2020, NMSU became the first university in Sodexo's portfolio to achieve the **Rise Safe certification**, after passing a 37-point safety and sanitation audit and an independent verification of compliance by Bureau Veritas. It was created to standardize processes and procedures for education, training, safety, sanitation and communications in response to the pandemic and in adherence with CDC guidelines and additional rules set by state and local health officials.

Food service around campus serves the NMSU community with multiple options in ordering and delivery, consistent with the current quality, standards, and regulations. More information about dining options and hours is available at dining.nmsu.edu.

Dine-in service is offered only under conditions allowed by current New Mexico public health orders. Additional food service provides carryout and mobile ordering options.

A Dining Sanitation Team of frontline staff designated by yellow vests sanitize all customer-side touch surfaces every 20 minutes and as needed. The team serves as information experts to answer questions on COVID-19 procedures, navigation, and daily menus, and help to politely remind patrons about COVID-19 safety procedures such as social distancing and mask usage.

Technological and physical accommodations to reduce the exposure to COVID-19 include:

- ◆ Mobile app ordering
- ◆ New offerings for delivery through **Bite Universities app**
- ◆ Barriers and social distancing signage to control lines
- ◆ Touchless cashiering and acrylic barriers at cashier stations

- ◆ Elimination of self-service and buffet options
- ◆ Menu adaptations to accommodate to-go and delivery items
- ◆ Signage, maps and menus at the entrance to facilities
- ◆ Flexible and layered protective equipment for all employees
- ◆ Additional shaded and outdoor seating for dining near Corbett Center Student Union
- ◆ Tabletop acrylic barriers and social spacing of tables where appropriate

Protecting your health and safety

Face coverings

Wearing an **appropriate face covering** is just one aspect of our multi-pronged approach to protect the safety and health of our NMSU community. They are also required by the NMDOH for anyone in a public space, with exceptions for eating or drinking, or if otherwise advised by a health care provider. If wearing a face covering will adversely affect an employee's safety or health, employees should contact EHS&RM or the Aggie Health and Wellness Center for **additional guidance**. Vending machines across NMSU Las Cruces campus are stocked with face coverings, other protective equipment, and supplies.

If more than one person is in a university vehicle, all people in the vehicle must wear a courtesy face covering. This includes open-air utility vehicles.

NMSU is providing unbranded reusable face coverings that meet CDC standards for all faculty and staff. To obtain face coverings, please send quantity needed along with MSC to asc@nmsu.edu. Face coverings with NMSU logos are available from **approved suppliers** for promotional and marketing activities. Procurement cards may be used for orders.

Cleaning for prevention

NMSU is taking measures to reduce community spread of COVID-19 through **daily enhanced cleaning** and disinfection procedures created by Environmental Health Safety and Risk Management (EHS&RM) based on guidance from the CDC and the NMDOH for cleaning and disinfection.

We can all contribute to a healthier campus by following these general guidelines:

- ◆ Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting, focusing on high-touch surfaces such as residence hall communal rooms, public restrooms, computer labs, exercise rooms, library tables, buttons, handrails, tables, faucets, doorknobs, and shared keyboards. Cleaning and disinfecting daily and between users for shared workstations with attention to these areas helps remove bacteria and viruses, including the virus that causes COVID-19.
- ◆ Practice good hygiene after cleaning:
 - ▶ Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - ▶ If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- ◆ Facilities and Services will provide **building monitors** with disinfecting wipes for classrooms for distribution to instructors. Instructors or building monitors can call the Facilities and Services Work Order Desk, 575-646-7114, if supplies need to be replenished.

Detailed **guidelines for cleaning** are available on the EHS&RM website. That site includes cleaning procedures, information on the **process to clean after a positive case is reported**, and recommended **disinfectants**.

Our Facilities and Services custodial team has revised their schedules to increase custodial coverage and to have staff on campus during classes. Custodial team schedules will be adjusted, if needed, after classroom schedules are finalized.

Custodial teams clean and sanitize shared spaces on a **daily basis** in academic buildings, including classrooms, computer labs, and restrooms, plus building entryways, break rooms, elevators, conference rooms, and common areas. Some tasks will be reduced to allow custodians time to focus on sanitizing high-use areas, including restroom fixtures, door handles, common area countertops, elevator buttons, and handrails.

Custodial teams use two methods of enhanced cleaning: manual sanitation and disinfection of surfaces multiple times during the day, and daily electrostatic disinfection. Teams perform enhanced daily cleaning between 4 and 8 a.m. in classroom buildings. A dedicated team of custodians also perform additional cleaning of high touch points between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. This ensures the areas receive two additional cleanings during the day.

Daily electrostatic disinfection is performed in classrooms that are scheduled for face-to-face instruction. A report of a positive COVID-19 test will also initiate the electrostatic disinfection process. A team will be assigned to perform the disinfection in accordance with the **process to clean after a positive case is reported**.

Facilities and Services will perform enhanced cleaning upon request, even without a positive test result for COVID-19. The request needs to be routed through the building monitor, who will call Facilities and Services to request the service and follow up with a work order. The enhanced cleaning team supervisor will coordinate enhanced cleaning to take place prior to the start of the next scheduled business day or no later than Friday of the current work week.

Custodial teams perform the following tasks on a **weekly basis** in the academic buildings:

- ◆ Remove trash and recyclable materials from departmental offices
- ◆ Vacuum and dust surfaces without moving items in departmental offices
- ◆ Clean hard surface floors weekly
- ◆ Vacuum and carpet spot removal weekly

In non-academic buildings, the custodial team adapt their cleaning schedule and frequency to adjust for reduced building occupancy. Schedule changes are communicated to the building monitors.

Custodial teams perform the following tasks on in the non-academic buildings:

- ◆ Clean and sanitize occupied departmental offices, training and computer rooms, and restrooms
- ◆ Clean building entryways, break rooms, elevators, conference rooms, and common areas
- ◆ Empty trash receptacles in common areas and break rooms
- ◆ Remove trash and recyclable materials from departmental offices
- ◆ Vacuum and dust surfaces without moving items in occupied departmental offices
- ◆ Clean hard surface floors weekly

- ◆ Vacuum and spot removal weekly

Facilities and Services will update the cleaning protocol regularly and communicate updates with building monitors and campus community.

COVID-19 supplies

NMSU provides supplies needed to maintain a healthy environment. All faculty, staff, and students should ensure that their personal workspaces are sanitized, and NMSU will ensure availability of supplies. Employees and students will be provided masks if needed, or they may use their own. Other efforts to support personal sanitation include:

Las Cruces campus

- ◆ **Sanitization Stations:** Approximately 1,300 hand sanitizer dispensers have been installed in classrooms and common areas on the Las Cruces campus. Custodial teams service the dispensers as part of the university's daily cleaning program.
- ◆ **Supply Vending Machines:** Eight machines are installed **across campus** and contain hand sanitizer, disposable gloves, reusable and disposable masks, safety glasses, disinfectant wipes and other items. These supplies are paid for by CARES Act funding and are available to NMSU employees, including teaching assistants and graduate assistants, by swiping their Aggie ID card or entering their Aggie ID number. For issues or questions relating to vending machines, contact the Aggie Service Center asc@nmsu.edu or call 575-646-2000.
- ◆ **Snack Vending Machines:** In select locations, machines have been stocked with reusable cloth masks and personal hand sanitizer. Vending machines are located at Corbett Center, Garcia Hall, Juniper Hall and Rhodes-Garrett Hamiel.
- ◆ **For COVID-19 supply purchases outside of the vending machines,** contact the Aggie Service Center asc@nmsu.edu or call 575-646-2000.

Community colleges and statewide locations

For assistance with COVID-19 protective supplies purchases, contact the Aggie Service Center at asc@nmsu.edu or call 575-646-2000.

Facility modifications, barriers and shields

Space modifications are managed through Facilities and Services. For assistance with barrier purchases that do not require Facilities installation, contact the Aggie Service Center at asc@nmsu.edu or call 575-646-2000. For more information, visit the [Aggie Service Center COVID-19 Protective Supplies webpage](#).

Signs and informational posters

In addition to signage installed by Facilities and Services, printable informational posters, checklists, and fliers are available for download at now.nmsu.edu, along with guidelines about where and how they should be posted by building monitors. These include reminders about the NMSU system's COVID-19 Safety Commitment, rules and expectations regarding personal responsibility, checklists for self-monitoring of health and wellness, information about reporting a positive COVID-19 test, and other topics.

Guidelines for campus visitors and events

Much like NMSU students and employees, visitors to each of New Mexico State University's campuses are responsible for following all current public health orders and travel restrictions and for taking all steps needed to minimize the possible transmission of COVID-19.

Any visiting faculty, vendors, contractors, outside community members or other campus visitors who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should not come to any NMSU campuses. These individuals should stay home and contact their healthcare provider.

Vendors and contractors visiting campus must complete a **visitor commitment form for vendors**, which will be provided and collected by campus offices for each individual visiting campus. This form will be submitted to Procurement Services and filed with the vendor's profile.

Visiting faculty are subject to current **public health orders** and **NMDOH travel restrictions** that apply to travelers entering New Mexico for business purposes.

Resources for campus visitors

- ◆ **CDC guidelines for travel**
- ◆ **NMDOH travel restrictions**
- ◆ **COVID Safe Practices (CSPs)**
- ◆ **Public Health Orders**

In alignment with current **public health orders** from the State of New Mexico, all visitors to campuses within the NMSU system must wear a mask or face covering at all times when indoors unless eating or drinking. Masks are not required when exercising outdoors alone or with members of the same household, or attending a small, outdoor gathering of fully vaccinated individuals no larger than the applicable mass gathering limit for the county or 20 individuals, whichever is less.

Only NMSU students, NMSU employees and those conducting official business with the university are permitted inside NMSU buildings. Zuhl and Branson libraries are closed to the general public at this time.

Anyone visiting an NMSU campus must follow all signage and instructions posted indoors and outdoors regarding face coverings, social distancing, the use of access doors, and traffic flow directions.

Guidelines for events and gatherings

New Mexico State University has a strong relationship with the communities we serve. Under normal circumstances, NMSU invites alumni, donors, community members and other guests to each of our campuses to take part in events and gatherings. These activities help NMSU bring our educational mission to our community, as outlined in our strategic plan, **NMSU LEADS 2025**, Goal 3: Amplify Extension and Outreach.

The following guidelines balance the need for events during COVID-19 and the obligation to mitigate the risks of these events. For this guidance, events include a coordinated gathering of

five or more individuals at a location within the NMSU system for a purpose outside a normal workplace or instructional meeting.

Decisions regarding gatherings must be made in the interest of the health and safety of our university community and in accordance with current public health guidance. NMSU will continue to reassess this guidance and update these temporary restrictions as appropriate.

The university encourages virtual, online activities whenever possible. Requests for gatherings larger than five individuals must include a compelling reason for the gathering which cannot be accommodated in a virtual environment.

These gatherings and similar activities may be permitted at the discretion of the applicable campus leader, dean, vice president, or equivalent authority as long as they adhere to current public health orders. All flyers, social media posts and other publicity materials should include information about COVID-safe practices and compliance with public health orders. Here's an example statement: "All NMSU in-person events follow COVID-safe practices. Mask-wearing and social distancing will be enforced in accordance with state **public health orders.**"

Student events and gatherings

- ◆ The normal Activity Request process is in place for student events.
- ◆ Requests that require academic space, can be submitted to University Student Records via the **Event Scheduling website** following approval by Campus Activities.
- ◆ All student organizations should review the revised and updated **Student Organization COVID-19 Policies.**

Employee, department and NMSU-sponsored events

- ◆ Employee gatherings, outside of normal business, must follow all rules and public health guidance, as outlined by the NMDOH.
- ◆ The event request process begins by submitting the **Event Request Form.**
- ◆ Event requests, with their safety plans approved by the Department Head or Division Director will be reviewed and approved by a group from Auxiliary Services, EHS&RM, Fire, Police and F&S. The plan must be submitted at least two weeks in advance and include the date, time, duration, and location of the event; the names of attendees; and steps outlined to ensure social distancing, requirements for face coverings and other measures to ensure the healthiest possible situation.
- ◆ Requests requiring a reservation of academic space, can be submitted to University Student Records via the **Event Scheduling website** upon approval.

NMSU special events

- ◆ Special events at NMSU will follow all rules as outlined by the CDC, NCAA, Western Athletic Conference and NM Department of Health.
- ◆ Concerts and other performing arts presentations must be scheduled in accordance with rules outlined by the CDC and NM Department of Health, after these events are approved at the state level.

Community events and gatherings

- ◆ Community members seeking to rent space at NMSU for an event must ensure the event follows all rules and public health guidance, as outlined by the NM Department of Health. Current public health orders describe allowable gatherings as part of the **Red to Green system** implemented by the New Mexico Department of Health.
- ◆ Outdoor spaces at each NMSU campus are available to the general public, unless otherwise indicated by sandwich boards, signs or notices to the community. Outdoor activities and gatherings that follow current public health orders are permitted. Such gatherings include, but are not limited to exercising, picnics, fishing, and other instances where people gather for activity. Indoor spaces remain restricted to university business only.

Resources for events and gatherings

- ◆ **CDC guidance for events and gatherings**
- ◆ **COVID Safe Practices (CSPs)**
- ◆ **NM Public Health Orders**

Facts about COVID-19

COVID-19 has been circulating among humans since late 2019, and during that time we have learned much about the virus and how it is transmitted. This knowledge allows us to better understand **how to protect ourselves and our community**.

Transmission of different strains of COVID-19 happens primarily **person-to-person**, through droplets that are created when people talk, cough, sneeze, or engage in similar activities that cause particles from the lungs to be expelled through the nose and mouth.

It is important to know that people who are infected with COVID-19 are **contagious before they show symptoms**, and some people never show symptoms at all (see also **this article**). Because of this, the best advice is to treat everyone, even yourself, as if they are contagious with COVID-19. The simple precautions below can help reduce the chances of infection for all the known strains of this virus.

- ◆ **Maintain distance of at least 6 feet** between yourself and others to limit the chance of breathing any droplets that contain COVID-19.
- ◆ **Avoid touching people**, including shaking hands, hugging, and other forms of contact.
- ◆ Wear a face covering in public to provide a **barrier to COVID-19 transmission**.
- ◆ Wash your hands frequently following **WHO guidelines** to kill viruses on your hands.
- ◆ **Avoid touching your face**. Your hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Touching your face provides a route through which the virus can infect you.

One of the most effective ways to limit the spread of COVID-19 is by keeping distance between you and others (social distancing). As we begin spring semester, we continue to:

- ◆ Modify spaces to decrease population density. This can be in the form of markings on the floor showing appropriate distances, signage, limiting the number of people allowed in a space at one time, and rearranging furniture.
- ◆ Decrease the number of people in an office by modifying work schedules and through telework.

- ◆ Increase air circulation and let in fresh air where possible. This dilutes any COVID-19 virus present, thus **reducing the risk of transmission**.

Other methods of transmission are not as common, but are still important to understand so we can minimize the risk posed. Transmission from **hard surfaces** is possible, as the virus can live on **hard surfaces for up to 3 days**, and it is important to sanitize **high-touch surfaces**. The risk **of transmission through HVAC systems** is low, but it is possible.

Answers to many questions can be found at the **CDC, WHO, and NM Department of Health**. NMDOH provides specific guidance for New Mexico, including public health orders.

Documenting our planning and decisions

Documenting and reporting information about our operations during the COVID-19 pandemic is critical to our internal organizational decision-making, future planning, external requests and requirements, and for seeking support from national, state and local entities. NMSU is collecting data to document student and employee impacts due to transitions between phases, particularly focused on matters of equity and access. A decision log is maintained by the Pandemic Action Team. Please send relevant data to Gena Barela at **gbarela@nmsu.edu** for inclusion.