



Office of the Provost

MSC 3445
New Mexico State University
P. O. Box 30001
Las Cruces, NM 88003-8001
575-646-2594, fax: 575-646-6334
provost@nmsu.edu

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Dear Faculty,

Welcome to a new academic year! We launched this fall in a new phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and want to assure you that the health, safety and welfare of the NMSU community is at the core of all of our plans and decision-making. I write to you today to share some additional information about our plans for this academic year, both in Las Cruces and other sites.

The Pandemic Action Team has developed a plan and a set of online resources that create the pathway for a safe, healthy and productive semester of learning, research, service and community. In what follows, I will summarize the guidelines for faculty interactions with students and staff in teaching, student related activities, scholarship and other settings.

Please visit our [NMSU Now](#) website, and the new [Faculty Absence FAQs](#), for the most up-to-date information.

COVID-Safe Policies and Protocols:

Faculty or staff may not **differentiate**, in any way or setting, students who are vaccinated and those who are not.

- Faculty and staff should **reinforce the mask mandate** in all in classrooms, labs, offices, field work/trips, or other learning settings, except outdoors. Students will be expected to comply with the masking requirements of their internship, fieldwork placements and other work/trip sites. In New Mexico, masks are currently required in all indoor settings, regardless of vaccination status.
- **Students without masks** should be discreetly reminded to put their mask on. Should they refuse, you may ask them to leave. If necessary, you may choose to dismiss class or call the NMSU Police department for assistance in de-escalating the situation. Please follow up with a referral to the Dean of Students if any of the later actions are taken.
- Please **post this guide** in your classrooms and online.
- Faculty teaching and working at **sites not operated by NMSU** should follow the guidance of the hosting partner (community college, lab, facility owner).
- Where needed, please **follow posted guidance** specific to classroom ventilation, air purifiers, windows, and doors.

Students and Course Engagement:

- The [Student Success Centers](#) and [Campus Tutoring](#) are welcoming and providing resources to students both in-person and online. Please check services and point your students to activities that are relevant to your courses.
- **Office hours** may be held in person or virtually using NMSU licensed software (e.g. Canvas, Zoom). Consistency in your weekly office hours schedule will help to ensure equal access and avoid potential confusion.

- Specific course resources or **modifications** should be submitted to your Department Head. They will assist you, as much as is feasible, with requests that do not alter our commitment to in-person classes and academic success.
- Expect and plan for **absenteeism**. This [absence resource](#) lays out some planning ideas.
- Be as flexible as possible in accepting **late work** and adjusting due dates. At the same time, be mindful of students who are falling irreparably behind. Those students should meet with you or an academic advisor to identify academic options, including a medical withdrawal.
- Through the [Crimson Commitment Video](#) and [syllabus addendum](#), students have been informed of their responsibility to communicate with faculty about absences and missed work. In so far as possible, please work with them to make up experiences and course activities. We recognize the difficult balancing act between student needs and course integrity and rigor, but trust your decisions on those issues.
- [Syllabus resources](#) have been updated with current policy statements for COVID-19.
- There are a limited number of **outdoor tents**, with hay bale seating, that can be reserved for class use. Be sure to make your reservations well in advance of class.
- **You@NMSU** is an easy-to-use web-based portal designed to deliver mental health information and assistance for college students online. **The tool can** help Aggies manage stress, set goals, promote happiness and well-being, and connect to campus resources to "*thrive, succeed, and matter.*" Faculty are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the [YOU@NMSU](#) website <http://you.nmsu.edu/> to identify the resources and options available so that they can share with students who may indicate specific stress or anxiety concerns.

Faculty Wellness:

- Faculty should follow CDC general guidance and not come to campus when **not feeling well** or following a close contact with a positive case. Follow guidance in the “When can I come back?” [decision tree graphic](#) if you are unsure. After consultation with their department head, faculty may temporarily relocate to synchronous teaching or use other strategies to ensure continuity of instruction. Extended absences must be reported to Human Resources.
- The [Employee Assistance Program](#) is available to help you adjust to bothersome issues related to personal or work settings. Those issues don’t have to be COVID-related.

Finally, please be a frequent visitor to our [NMSU NOW](#) website to ensure you have the most up-to-date information. If you have additional questions, please start with your department head or dean. We are so excited to have you back and are keen to support you. Ideas or comments can be sent to covid19@nmsu.edu.

Wishing you and our students a healthy and successful academic year.



Rebecca Campbell

Associate Provost for Academic Administration