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**Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Situations
Students Refusing to Follow Mask Requirements**

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Background: The UW Board of Trustees voted to proceed with a traditional fall 2021 semester while taking steps to manage COVID-19 amid an increase in cases locally and nationally. Those steps include a temporary requirement for indoor masks to start the semester; the board will revisit the requirement at its Sept. 15, 2021 meeting.

Policy: With some exceptions, masks are required inside most University of Wyoming buildings where 6-foot social distancing isn't possible, through at least Sept 20, 2021. Classrooms, labs, and other learning environments are places where 6-foot distancing is not always possible, so masks will be necessary there. For classes where the ability to see speakers' mouths is essential, faculty members will have the ability to seek exceptions to the masking policy. As well, employees and students who have legitimate medical reasons to not wear masks can seek exceptions.

Strategies you may want to use when a student arrives to class without appropriate face covering and/or removes it during class

1. Before class begins, check your building to see where mask/hand sanitizer stations are located.
2. On the first day of class (and maybe several more), remind the entire class of the requirement to wear face masks while in the classroom as well as other high traffic indoor spaces.
 - a. If a medical condition prevents them from wearing a mask and/or there is the need for the student to see your mouth, inform the class they can visit Disability Support Services (DSS) to determine appropriate accommodations.
 - b. If you have guests attend your class, it is a good idea to review the policy with them and the class.
3. If a student arrives to class without appropriate face covering, start with a soft reminder. Some students may have forgotten to bring a face covering to class. If that is the case, ask them to go to the closest hand sanitizer/mask station and get one. Some students may have them in their backpack or pocket and just need a gentle nudge to put it on.

4. If someone says, "I won't wear a mask," or "It's my right to not wear a mask," stay respectful and calm. If possible, speak directly with the student as privately as possible.
 - a. You may consider responding with this statement:
"The University COVID-19 policy doesn't allow us to be in class together without masks for everyone's safety. There is a hand sanitizer/mask station (identify the location). You can get a mask there."
 - b. Try giving options rather than orders, such as:
"You either need to wear a mask or you will have to choose to leave class."
5. If the student refuses to wear the mask and refuses to leave the classroom, you should record the student's name and tell them they are in violation of the Code of Student Conduct and they should expect to hear from the Dean of Students about university policy. (Note: if you have a large class and observe a student coming into class without a mask and do not know the student's name, you may consider doing an impromptu roll call – so it's a good idea to have your class roster with you every day.)
 - a. At this point, you have the option of continuing with class or dismissing class (possibly with an online assignment).
 - b. If you choose to continue and the room allows, you can ask the student to move to a location that is socially distanced or give other students the opportunity to change their seating.
 - c. When the class concludes, be sure to contact the Dean of Students to report the student's behavior.
6. In the unlikely event that the student won't leave, isn't cooperative, and becomes aggressive, advise the student that they have left you with no choice but to call UW Police Department to assist. Again, do so in a calm and respectful manner, and as privately as possible. This may be enough impetus for the student to choose to leave the classroom.
 - a. If the student does not comply, call UWPD (307-766-5179). (It is a good idea to have this number saved in your contact list, and your cell phone available, at all times.)
 - b. When you call UWPD, be prepared to provide the building/room number, student name and your name. Once they arrive, ask the student to join the officer in the hallway.
 - c. In this situation, it is a good idea to dismiss the rest of the class and follow up with them in an email. If possible, ask the students to use an alternative exit.
 - d. And remember, cell phones (aka video cameras) may be used to record the interaction. So, stay calm, speak clearly, and offer those not wearing masks the opportunity to make good decisions.

Many of these strategies and best practices were provided by a panel of experts at Old Dominion University. If you would like to read more, go to:

https://www.odu.edu/facultydevelopment/news/2020/9/what_should_you_do_i).