

Welcome!

COVID-19 Special Issue
July 2020

COVID-19 Information Access

OSU COVID-19
information:

<https://go.okstate.edu/coronavirus/index.html>

Stillwater COVID-19
information:

<http://stillwater.org/page/breaking-news>

Oklahoma COVID-19
information:

<https://coronavirus.health.ok.gov/>

CDC COVID-19
information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>



ZoGSS Newsletter

COVID-19 Special Issue

With all of the uncertainty surrounding teaching and research in the upcoming fall semester, we want to help put grad students' minds somewhat at ease by compiling the information we have acquired over the summer. Many thanks to Dr. Belden, Dr. Towner, and the rest of the IB faculty and staff for providing us with much-needed information over the last few weeks!

In the weeks leading up to the start of the fall semester, you will be receiving a lot of additional information as policies and procedures solidify. Expect to receive instruction for things such as main office interactions, teaching protocols, keys, and elevator usage.



Useful Info:

Cowboys Coming Back plan:
<https://go.okstate.edu/coronavirus/campus-reopening-plan/plan-at-a-glance/>

OSU cleaning procedures:
<https://go.okstate.edu/coronavirus/campus-reopening-plan/plan-at-a-glance/campus-life-facilities/>

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Coronavirus Action Committee (CAC)

Purpose: Dr. Belden created this action committee to address, discuss, and implement departmental concerns and policies for the upcoming fall semester regarding COVID-19.

Members: Dr. Towner (chair), Dr. Belden, Dr. Dzialowski, Dr. French, Taylor Neighbors, and Austin Leone

If you have questions, please feel free to contact Austin (aaleone@okstate.edu) or one of the other committee members.

More detailed responses to many of the questions below can be found by reading through the “Cowboys Coming Back” plan for students and employees. [See links on sidebars.](#)



Sanitization, PPE, and health insurance:

1. What are the cleaning procedures for classrooms, research labs, and other high-traffic areas such as the LSW 5th floor computer lab?

Useful Info:

OSU information on face coverings:

<https://go.okstate.edu/coronavirus/campus-reopening-plan/plan-at-a-glance/face-coverings.html>

United Healthcare student insurance policy:

<https://www.uhcsr.com/school-year>

(this should allow you to access your policy information if you have the school insurance)

Latest UHC Provider News Release:

<https://www.uhcprovider.com/en/resource-library/news/Novel-Coronavirus-COVID-19.html>

Claims and General Info FAQ:

<https://www.uhcsr.com/faqs>

At the university level: Cleaning crews will clean areas daily, sometimes multiple times per day in higher use areas. “Touch-point cleaning” includes door handles, push plates/bars, elevator buttons, stair rails, and light switches.

At the departmental level: In addition to custodial cleaning, our department will have cleaning products (e.g. alcohol-based wipes) in our teaching labs for students and TAs to clean the room before and after class. Major advisors and course instructors will provide specific instructions for any sensitive lab equipment that needs special sanitization.

2. **What are the current plans for making sure additional masks are available for individuals who need them?**

Our department has masks on reserve for TAs. All TAs will also be provided with face shields for teaching.

If you have trouble acquiring masks, please contact Austin (ealeone@okstate.edu) or Dr. Towner (mary.towner@okstate.edu). The ZoGSS fundraising committee is looking into the possibility of buying masks and having the ZoGSS logo printed on them to sell to students.

3. **What are the specifics for what student health insurance will cover with respect to COVID-19 treatment, including potential hospitalization and intensive care?**

UHCSR are waiving member cost sharing for the treatment for those diagnosed with COVID-19 through the national public health emergency period (currently set at 7/24/2020). Following this date, all treatment will be paid according to policy provisions unless there is a government or corporate directive to extend the date. Antibody tests, swabs, and other related visits/tests seem to be covered at no cost through 7/24/2020, and this is expected to be extended as needed for the national emergency.

Useful Info:

Who to contact if individuals in the building refuse to put on a mask:

-Student Violations: Student Conduct Education & Administration; 405-744-5470 or submitted online at <https://studentconduct.okstate.edu/report>

From:

<https://go.okstate.edu/coronavirus/faq/index.html>

(a useful source of information from OSU for common COVID-19 questions)

4. Will the 4th and 5th floor break rooms still be open?

Break rooms are still open and will remain so unless they are needed for other purposes in the future. We ask that you please limit your time in the break room and restrict capacity to one person in the room at a time. Everyone who enters the break room needs to be wearing a mask and no one should be eating in there. The primary purpose of the break rooms is for usage of the refrigerator, microwave, and sink.

Teaching as a graduate student:

All the students on their webcams at 8 in the morning waiting for class to start



1. How do we handle individuals who refuse to follow guidelines such as wearing masks?

"All OSU students, employees, and visitors must wear a face covering (mask) upon entering any campus building and when near or encountering others...As a reminder, face coverings do not replace the need to maintain social distancing, frequent handwashing, and rigorous cleaning and disinfecting routines."

– Cowboys Coming Back plan, Face Coverings

In the building: Everyone who enters OSU buildings is required to wear a mask, so that should limit the amount of non-compliance. We need to set an example, so we need everyone to follow and enforce these guidelines consistently starting now. You should feel comfortable

Useful Info:

Reporting an incident regarding a student:

<https://studentconduct.okstate.edu/report>

Where to direct students who say they cannot wear masks for some reason:

Have them visit

<https://accessibility.okstate.edu/>

or email

accessibility@okstate.edu

politely asking individuals to put on a mask or adjust their mask to fully cover their mouth and nose.

In undergraduate teaching labs: If one of your students refuses to follow guidelines, the first thing to do is politely request they either put on a mask and remain in class or leave the room. Remind them that mask-wearing is an OSU policy and not just for the individual, but to protect those around them.

If they refuse, the first thing you should do is talk to the instructor for the course. The course faculty and lab coordinators will provide step-by-step instructions to their TAs on how to handle this type of situation. There will also be a statement in all syllabi saying that students are required to wear masks while in campus buildings or in close proximity to others.

- 2. If one of my students is behaving in a way that makes me uncomfortable (e.g. not social distancing, pulling mask down/taking mask off), am I allowed to leave the room?**

Keep in mind that you are the responsible party in the labs you teach. Do your best to de-escalate the situation by requesting the student stop what they are doing and explaining why it is not appropriate. We have not really had these sort of extreme issues in the past, so hopefully that trend continues in the fall.

With that being said, you should not have to remain in a situation where you feel your health or safety is at risk, so if a situation escalates to that point, you are allowed to leave.

- 3. What kind of training will TAs get regarding new lab technology and teaching with social distancing?**

Austin Leone is organizing a “mock lab” where a few TAs simulate a socially-distanced lab with full PPE to test new lab set-ups and technology. Faculty for each lab course should be contacting their TAs to arrange course-specific training and equipment testing.

Useful Info:

OSU self-screening checklist:

<https://go.okstate.edu/site-files/docs/covid-19-announcement/self-assessment-checklist.pdf>

If a student or employee tests positive:

<https://go.okstate.edu/coronavirus/campus-reopening-plan/plan-at-a-glance/positive-case-on-campus.html>

How to schedule a COVID-19 test:

-Note: Be sure to specify you will need a test in Stillwater

OSU Swab Pod:

-Call 405-744-7665 or schedule through the patient portal
-Open Mon-Fri; 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
-Location: 1202 W. Farm Rd.

Payne County Health Department:

-Call 405-372-8200
-Testing Location: 1321 West 7th

4. **What do I do if one of my students says they cannot wear a mask for some reason?**

Students who cannot wear masks for some reason will not be attending labs in person. Student Accessibility Services will work to accommodate these students in other ways, such as through virtual lab attendance. Students who need various accommodations regarding masks or being at high risk from COVID-19 should be directed to the Student Accessibility Services for assistance. Many of these will have to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

5. **What will happen if one of my students shows up sick to lab?**

Students who show up sick to lab or lecture will be asked to leave. Everyone is asked to perform “self-screening” each morning before coming to campus and OSU has provided a [self-screening checklist](#). The Cowboys Coming Back student plan states that students who become ill on campus should isolate and call University Health Services to get tested.

6. **What happens if one of my students tests positive?**

To date, if a student is sick with COVID-19, they should follow the protocols found in the [Cowboys Coming Back](#) (CCB) plan. TAs should follow the CCB plan along with [CDC guidelines](#) for potential exposure. Additional departmental protocols are still in development from the CAC.

The Health Department and the OSU “Swab Pod” are both offering free COVID-19 tests [**by appointment only**](#).

If a student tests positive, the immediate task is to identify anyone the student has had close contact with in the last 4 days and notify those individuals to self-quarantine and get tested. OSU is working to increasing the number of individuals working as “contact tracers” on campus.

Useful Info:

Who to contact if you do not feel comfortable working face-to-face:

Discuss your concerns with your supervisor or contact the Office of Equal Opportunity at eeo@okstate.edu or 405-744-9153

Students can also contact Student Accessibility Services regarding concerns about academics and COVID-19:

<https://accessibility.okstate.edu/>

or accessibility@okstate.edu

7. What happens if a TA has to self-quarantine and can no longer teach their lab section(s)?

Course instructors and lab coordinators will have a policy for how to deal with TAs who have to self-quarantine because they are sick or were potentially exposed to COVID-19. Other TAs may be asked to step in and substitute for the quarantined TA. If the quarantined TA is not sick, they may be able to take on additional virtual work (grading, online lab work, etc.) to help unburden TAs who take on more in-person teaching responsibilities. If this is not possible, we may have to shift to a virtual lab alternative or find other alternative solutions.

8. Will I still get paid if I get sick for an extended period of time and cannot teach?

If you get sick, you will still get paid. This has been the policy since before coronavirus. If you are quarantined but not sick, you will likely be asked to work remotely as much as possible to continue contributing to the course.

9. If I believe I am at higher risk from COVID-19 and am not comfortable teaching in person, what do I do?

You should have received an email explaining how to request special accommodations relating to teaching assignments. Please contact Dr. Belden (jbelden@okstate.edu) for more information. The CDC has provided [updated guidelines](#) on individuals at risk of severe illness and those who should exercise extra precautions.

10. Could we have more “free days” built into lab so that students who are showing symptoms do not feel pressured to attend lab even though they may be sick?

Course instructors and lab coordinators should have a plan regarding how to handle student attendance and accommodate students who miss lab. Labs will be socially-distanced with students maintaining 6 feet of distance from one another and 12 feet of distance from the TA and will be at lower capacity (usually 1 student per lab table). We

Useful Info:

For questions about current travel guidelines and procedures:

-Autumn Lovelace
autumn.lovelace@okstate.edu

-A&S Business Office
 405-744-5654

imagine that there will be a lot of flexibility regarding student attendance.



Research

and Office Spaces:

1. Will there be special protocols established to promote hands-on work with undergraduates in a lab setting?

To some extent, this will be up to the PI of the lab to decide on how many undergraduates they can safely support with proper PPE and social distancing. Undergraduate researchers should be able to work with the same protocols as graduate students in that same lab as long as there is space and PPE for them to do so.

2. Will undergraduate students in BIOL 4700 still be allowed to participate in field and/or lab activities?

The protocol for participation is the responsibility of the PI and the graduate student(s) overseeing the 4700 student. Travel permission is the responsibility of the PI as well. Taylor sent out an email in June with a PDF of HR Travel Information and the Travel Exemption Request document.

3. What happens if the building is shut down but I still have to do essential animal care?

Animal care falls under essential activities. Further instruction regarding details such as who will be responsible for animal care in case the building is shut down will be coming soon. Consult with the faculty member listed on your IACUC protocol for more information as well. Potential

Useful Info:

Software available for download for OSU students:

<https://it.okstate.edu/services/software-distribution/index.html>

Integrative Biology Technology Committee:
-Dr. French
-Dr. Jeyasingh
-Dr. Reichert
-Student rep: Emily Geest

outcomes include the use of extra PPE to handle essential animal care.

4. What is the plan for use of the 5th floor computer lab in the fall?

We are continuing to work on this issue as well. If grad students need access to particular software, OSU offers some software for free to students. More specialized software such as ArcGIS may be more difficult to provide to individual students.

The Technology Committee is looking into the logistics of dispersing computer lab computers throughout the building so that they can still be fully utilized while maintaining social distancing. Feel free to contact Emily Geest (egeest@okstate.edu) with questions about the computer lab or software availability.

5. What happens if I have my comprehensive exams or defense in the fall?

Students have successfully defended virtually in both the spring and summer semesters. The Cowboys Coming Back student plan states that in-person defenses “are anticipated to return” in the fall, but that virtual defenses may be used if necessary. Comprehensive exams consist of a small group and could be conducted with social distancing, but virtual comprehensive exams are still accepted if necessary.

6. What do I do if my degree completion timeline is being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Dr. Grindstaff sent out requests for information from graduate students and their advisors back in April regarding impacts to degree completion due to COVID-19. If you did not submit the survey originally but would still like to, please send your completed survey to Dr. Luttbeg (luttbeg@okstate.edu).

Please document anything that has caused a disruption in your ability to complete your degree on time (interrupted

Useful Info:

For medical concerns related to COVID-19, email covid19@okstate.edu or contact University Health Services at 405-744-7665

Integrative Biology Planning Committee:

-Dr. McMurry
-Dr. Dzialowski
-Dr. Waldman
-Student Rep: Carrie Klase

data collection, inability to collect data, etc.) so that you will have justification to ask for more time and funding from the grad college in the future if necessary. Communication with your major advisor and the grad coordinator, Dr. Luttbeg, is essential.

7. How can I practice social distancing with my office mates?

This is partially the responsibility of you and your office mates. Possible solutions include **1)** scheduling time for each individual to work in the office to stagger office use; **2)** temporarily expanding graduate student office space to other open spaces in the building; **3)** shuffling of office occupants to cluster couples/roommates who are already in closer contact with one another; **4)** increased work from home. The planning committee can assist with some of this, so feel free to contact the student rep, Carrie Klase (carrie.klase@okstate.edu).

You should also not feel obligated to work in your office in LSW if you do not feel comfortable. If you have technology needs to enable you to effectively work from home, please contact Austin (ealeone@okstate.edu) or Emily (egeest@okstate.edu).

***Please realize that this information is accurate, to the best of our knowledge, as of when it was written (July 2020), but as the COVID-19 situation evolves in and around Stillwater, plans and protocols may change. Your advisor and faculty that you TA or RA for are good contacts for any additional questions you may have, especially regarding research and teaching.**

Contact Us:

Austin Leone – President
ealeone@okstate.edu

James Erdmann – Vice President
james.erdmann@okstate.edu

Dani Kirsch – Secretary
danielle.kirsch@okstate.edu

Taylor Carlson – Treasurer
taylor.carlson11@okstate.edu

MARTY, WHATEVER HAPPENS



ZoGSS serves as the representative organization and voice of the graduate student body of the Department of Integrative Biology at Oklahoma State University. Our mission is to provide professional and social opportunities for the graduate students in our department.
