

MEMORANDUM

To: Gillings School Faculty

From: Barbara K. Rimer, DrPH
Dean and Alumni Distinguished Professor

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Senior Associate Dean, Academic & Student Affairs

Date: January 25, 2022

Subject: Gillings Return to In-Person Instruction – January 31, 2022

The purpose of this message is to update our plans for **returning to in-person instruction at Gillings beginning Monday, January 31, 2022.**

As you know, given the very high transmissibility of the Omicron variant, we started the semester with three weeks of remote instruction. We have monitored the data on campus and in our local community. We have been in discussion with our infectious disease specialists and with colleagues here on campus who have been successfully navigating in-person instruction while mitigating against spread of the virus with masking, eliminating food/drink in classrooms, and distancing, where possible. As we indicated at the time of the original memo, **we will return to in-person mode of instruction (MOI) as the default MOI for all Gillings classes beginning Monday, January 31, 2022.** Thus, the expectation is for in-person instruction with the following two exceptions:

1. **The seven courses that have ALREADY BEEN APPROVED for a PERMANENT MOI change to remote for the spring 2022 semester.** No additional approvals are required.
2. **APPROVALS for TEMPORARY MOI CHANGES that last more than one week must get prior approval.** If you have specific pedagogical reasons for requesting permission to extend your remote instruction beyond one week, you must send an email request to your Department Chair with the rationale clearly explained; and then get approval from the Sr. Associate Dean for Academic & Student Affairs. Specific pedagogical reasons will include instructor rationales for certain teaching methods that enhance learning, enhanced small group activities for large classes, or other relevant improvements to the teaching and learning environment. As we have done previously, if there are many students who are out sick, or, if the instructor is sick, you may also request a temporary change in MOI using the same process.

We are aware that in a typical semester, faculty make temporary **ADJUSTMENTS** (typically lasting a week or less in duration) due to travel, illness, or other reasons. **TEMPORARY ADJUSTMENTS** lasting a week or less in duration do **NOT** require prior approvals. Please use your discretion in making these adjustments. If longer term changes are required, please communicate with your department chairs to determine if a temporary MOI change is required.

The provost has required us to **document and report MOI changes monthly**, both permanent and temporary changes. We do NOT need to report temporary adjustments involving MOI changes lasting less than a week in duration.

As we return to in-person classes on January 31, please consider the following important reminders:

- **Address flexibility.** Please **record all your lectures** for students who may be unable to attend in-person classes. For students who have discussed specific needs (e.g., isolating or other family illness, etc.), faculty members have discretion to allow students to view recordings, make up work and/or join class by Zoom if there is capacity to do so. We will not always know in advance if a student must miss class due to illness so recordings should be done for all classes.
- **Communicate with your students** so they are aware of your course plans. We will send a reminder to students that most classes will return to in-person instruction on Monday, January 31. However, please let them know if you have been approved for any change in MOI – permanent or temporary – they will need to hear directly from you!
- **Take care of your health.** If you have any concern at all that you have been exposed or contracted COVID, let your decision-making about whether to hold in-person classes be guided by exercising caution and erring on the side of reducing exposures. We know that the overwhelming majority of UNC-CH faculty, staff and students have been vaccinated. (We do not yet have sufficient campus data on boosters.) Fortunately, the evidence shows that most vaccinated people who have received a booster, and who test positive for COVID, will either be asymptomatic or have very mild symptoms. While that is comforting, we know that people still have legitimate concerns about contracting COVID, especially if they are immunocompromised (or someone they live with is immunocompromised) or have unvaccinated children or other family members at home. Please prioritize your health and be sure to communicate the same to your students.

We will continue to post updated FAQs and other information on our [Coronavirus Information Portal](#) soon and share updates as information changes.

As always, we will continue to maintain our touchstones of flexibility, adaptability and kindness as we interact with each other, with staff, and with our students. Please continue to follow guidelines regarding masking, handwashing, distancing where possible, and, if you have not gotten a booster, and are eligible, we strongly encourage you to get it. Also, please continue to refrain from allowing eating/drinking in class – just advise students who need to eat or drink to step out as needed. Thanks for your continued dedication to making Spring 2022 a successful semester.