

*A Message about Face Coverings/Masks from the Spartan Shield Task Force Co-chairs:*

Since the publication of the [Spartan Shield Plan](#), we have been asked excellent questions about face coverings. This email is intended to provide additional specificity to the University requirement regarding face coverings.

Our **policy** reads as follows:

*Faculty, staff, students, and visitors, including vendors, are required to wear face masks/coverings in all common areas of campus facilities including classrooms, and outdoor campus areas where social distancing is not possible. Exceptions are permitted for the use of dining facilities, participation in athletic practices and contests and instruction in selected fine arts. Detailed instructions on how best to navigate these activities will be provided by the respective areas that are reviewed by Dining Services, Athletics, Fitness and Recreation Center, and the College of Arts and Letters.*

As with all the Spartan Shield Plan requirements, our face mask/coverings policy is grounded in [CDC guidance](#):

*Cloth face coverings are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control. This recommendation is based on what we know about the role respiratory droplets play in the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, paired with emerging evidence from clinical and laboratory studies that shows cloth face coverings reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), so the use of cloth face coverings is particularly important in settings where people are close to each other or where social distancing is difficult to maintain.*

*Cloth face coverings are a critical preventive measure and are most essential in times when social distancing is difficult. If cloth face coverings cannot be used, make sure to take other measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread, including social distancing, frequent hand washing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.*

To that end, it is important that we discern what will be **acceptable face coverings** on our campus.

All face coverings, whether disposable or reusable, must

- be made with at least two layers of breathable material;
- fully cover the nose and mouth and secure under the chin;
- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face; and
- be secured with ties or ear loops, allowing one to remain hands-free.

Based on guidance of health authorities, the following are *not* acceptable face coverings: neck gaiters, open-chin triangle bandanas, and face coverings containing valves, mesh material or holes of any kind.

We have also been asked about the use of **face shields** to replace face coverings. The CDC offers this information:

*It is not known if face shields provide any benefit as source control to protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. CDC does not recommend use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings. Some people may choose to use a face shield when sustained close contact with other people is expected. If face shields are used without a mask, they should wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend to below the chin. Disposable face shields should only be worn for a single use. Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.*

Therefore, unless a face shield is coupled with a face mask, it is *not* considered an acceptable masking practice on our campus.

Please refer to the CDC's web page on [face coverings](#) for a more complete treatment of this topic.

We have also been asked about the **enforcement of face coverings/masks policy**. We are all responsible for the enforcement. If you see someone who is not wearing a face covering, remind them that it is required. They may have forgotten, and they will appreciate the reminder. If they need a covering, refer them to the closest office or department (if indoors) so that they may obtain a disposable mask. And, if they refuse, please contact the college office, supervisor, manager, or other person responsible for the area, and they will work with Campus Safety as necessary to ensure that the person leaves campus. Failure to wear a mask will mean that one cannot enter a building nor attend class. It is considered disruptive behavior and will be treated in the classroom through our disruptive classroom behavior policy and outside the classroom through Student Conduct. Faculty and staff compliance issues will be handled through Human Resources.

It is important to note that UT policy may vary from **City and County Executive Orders**. You may want to refer to these links as you travel the City and County.

City: <https://www.tampagov.net/emergency-management/covid-19/face-covering>

County: <https://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/en/residents/public-safety/emergency-management/stay-safe/face-coverings-and-masks>

**Face coverings are a simple tool** in the containment of COVID-19. Please do your part to make our campus as safe as it can be.

Spartan Shield Co-chairs

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