



## *The University of Oklahoma*

### STUDENT AFFAIRS

As a Division of Student Affairs, we strive to provide students with the best possible environment to learn, connect, and develop as global citizens. While this has always been our mission, this unprecedented season does not put anyone at ease, regardless of the many protocols in place to promote a safe and healthy community. Across the country and here at home, many have lost loved ones, jobs, and any sense of physical security or stability. Clearly COVID is affecting everyone including disproportionately affecting people of color at much higher rates. Each day brings new information that requires us to change our approach. Therefore, the concept of “comfort” differs substantially both here on campus and across the nation. While we continue to partner with colleagues across our University to offer meaningful learning experiences and support students’ well-being, we acknowledge that these extraordinary times require equally extraordinary measures to help students, staff, and faculty safely interact.

Our Student Affairs team has assisted the University to help set expectations and educate students on how to engage on campus during this public health crisis. We have employed educational approaches, messaging and communications, and social media and website presence. Some of those expectations and resources include, but are not limited to:

- Providing all OU community members with masks and requiring diligent mask wearing.
- Providing consistent access to free COVID testing for all faculty, staff, and students.
- Promoting social distancing and reducing occupancy to COVID capacities within meeting spaces and classrooms.
- Creating an informal and educational resolution process as a first step in addressing inappropriate masking behavior.
- Limiting visitors in residence halls and providing isolation housing with meal delivery and other services for residents who experience COVID-19.
- Working to provide over \$200,000 in emergency grants for students in need.
- Providing consultation to private Greek-affiliated housing to assist them in utilizing testing and operational strategies similar to university-owned housing protocols and strategies.
- Increasing capacity of mental health services.

Furthermore, campus partners have assisted in significant ways including:

- The Operations Division upgraded bathroom fixtures for touchless use, de-densified seating, made air filtration improvements, implemented partitions in high-traffic interaction areas like food operations, and many other initiatives.
- The Provost’s office also provided an instructional plan to reduce population density on campus by expanding passing times and limiting large class sizes. They also allowed students to request virtual schedules and encouraged instructors to be flexible regarding attendance and remote participation in hopes of motivating students to take care of themselves if needed.

Many of our team members have been working relentlessly to provide and maintain a level of support for students in the safest way possible and have often taken on a variety of roles outside of the everyday norm. These include: administering free curbside COVID testing, participating in

contact tracing with authority from the state health department, ordering and distributing PPE to 30,000 students, delivering personal items and daily meals to students in isolation, planning in-person and virtual programs for students and families, and supporting populations like our international students who were disparately impacted by both the public health crisis and federal policies creating administrative chaos.

We have provided a framework that evolves almost daily to increase precautionary measures, however we can not accomplish this without our students' willingness to help and move forward as a unified community. In order for us to succeed, we all must hold ourselves accountable to safe practices and standards both on and off-campus.

I hope that students know that our division and our University colleagues have worked tirelessly to provide the opportunity for us to keep moving forward. This work is new and daunting every day. Unfortunately, our critics leave us little room for error. As we improve our processes, hopefully they will see our genuine care and concern, even when we miss the mark. We will never stop trying our best to serve the students we love.

David A. Surratt, Ed.D.  
Vice President for Student Affairs & Dean of Students Division of Student Affairs  
900 Asp Ave. Room 265  
Norman, OK 73019  
University of Oklahoma  
Pronouns: he/him/his