



August 14, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

During the last Academic Affairs Town Hall, some of you raised concerns about the current protocol for handling students who come to class without a mask. In particular, there were understandable concerns about the impact this might have on our BIPOC students were a faculty member to call Public Safety for assistance. I believe these are important concerns and want to address them directly.

The question of calling Public Safety in this situation links two challenges we are facing as a nation: the COVID-19 pandemic and the legacy of systemic police violence aimed at black people. In crafting a solution, we need to balance our community's needs for health and safety with sympathetic understanding about the way this history may impact our students. RIT's Department of Public Safety supports this balance through annual diversity training and a commitment to treating every student equitably, professionally, and with compassion.

I believe it is critical that students be masked while in class and that the matter is serious enough that calling Public Safety needs to remain an option if a faculty member believes it is necessary. However, it is a last resort and it is important that any effort to address students on these issues be done consistently and equitably. In collaboration with Dr. Keith Jenkins, Associate Provost and Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion, I want to share with you some recommendations for how you can handle this issue should it arise in your classes.

Keith and I encourage you to:

- Establish clear ground rules regarding face coverings and social distancing on the first day of class. It may also be helpful to include the [RIT Ready Pledge](#) and any other academic classroom procedures you are implementing;
- Remind students of these ground rules daily or as needed;
- Articulate upfront the steps you will take in the event a student fails to adhere to the face covering requirements or other elements of the RIT Ready Pledge. For example:
 - You will first ask them to fully honor the pledge and classroom procedures and put on a mask.
 - In the event the student fails to put on a mask, then you will ask the student to leave class.
- Emphasize that should a student fail to adhere to your request to fully honor the RIT Ready Pledge and classroom procedures OR promptly leave the classroom as requested, in the interest of health and safety, Public Safety can be called to assist in addressing the matter;
- Consider documenting this in your syllabus;
- And, finally, please remain aware of the importance of consistent treatment of all students in the classroom and especially with regard to these procedures. It is critical that a student's gender, race/ethnicity, or his/her/their sexual, religious, first generation, socioeconomic, veteran, disability,

or international status have no bearing on the enforcement of masking protocols or any decision to contact Public Safety.

Please remember too that the classroom safety protocol, while vitally important to our health and safety, is new to faculty, staff, and students. Using the strategies listed above consistently from day one will help them become routine. And, masks will be available at the Welcome Center or the Campus Center in the event that a student has forgotten his/her/their mask.

Thank you for all that you are doing to ensure a safe classroom environment. If you have any questions or would like further guidance, please contact Carmie Garzione, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs (cngpro@rit.edu).

Sincerely,

Ellen Granberg, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs