

17 March 2022

Dear Faculty and Interpreters,

Later today, there will be notification to the RIT community that masks will be optional indoors except in classrooms, labs and studios. We are writing faculty and interpreters separately to give you advance notice that as of Monday, March 21, faculty members will have the option of removing their masks when lecturing behind a plexi shield. Faculty will be required to wear masks at all other times while in class.

Although masks will continue to be required in classrooms, labs, and studios, we have repeatedly heard that students can hear and understand faculty better when they are not wearing a mask. We have also heard concerns from interpreters about standing close by an unmasked faculty member. As we move into this next phase of the pandemic, communication among colleagues about masking preferences will become increasingly important. In this spirit, we encourage faculty and interpreters to discuss this change prior to classes on Monday. Some suggestions to start this discussion:

- Faculty members, please talk with the interpreters in your classes to see if they are comfortable with you removing your mask to lecture. If they are not comfortable, and you believe it is pedagogically sound for you to continue to lecture masked, please consider doing so.
- Interpreters, let faculty members know if you have concerns about them lecturing unmasked. If the faculty member determines that it is important to lecture unmasked, consider whether additional space away from the instructor will resolve the issue. If physically distancing does not resolve the issue, please work with your manager to explore options.

We also want to touch on one other topic. The mask requirement for classes, labs, and studios is a requirement. Individual faculty and classes cannot decide on their own to waive wearing masks.

The Pandemic Planning Group (PPG) continues to meet regularly. Any future changes related to the health and safety of our community will be thoroughly vetted and communicated by the PPG. Your patience and flexibility is key to our success in learning to live with COVID-19.

Sincerely,

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

Gerard Buckley, Ed.D.
NTID President and RIT Vice President and Dean