Friday, September 17, 2021

FAQ

Can you clarify the mask protocol?

Face masks greatly reduce the risk of COVID transmission. Students must wear face masks in the classrooms at all times. As we enter the fall and winter, UMB is transitioning to a requirement of KN95 masks in classrooms, which provides even greater protection. Masks are also required while indoors, except when briefly eating. It is important to remove masks for only a short period of time to eat and then put the masks back on (especially when you are talking to others).

Where can we take off masks?

You are not required to have masks on when outside (for example, in the courtyard or on the library terrace).

In the library, are we allowed to take off masks in study rooms?

No, masks must stay on in the study rooms because library policy requires a minimum of two students in the group study rooms.

In the library, are we allowed to take off masks while sitting at study carrels?

If you are at a study carrel at least 6 feet from others, you may take off your mask briefly while eating. You should put your mask back on while you are studying.

Where can students eat?

Students can eat in the courtyard, on the library terrace, in library study carrels (briefly), in empty classrooms, on hallway benches, and in lounge areas.

During the winter, where will we be allowed to eat in the building?

Westminster Hall will be available with distanced tables for eating as we enter the winter months (the classes that are presently meeting in Westminster will be transferred to the Ceremonial Courtroom after construction is completed—hopefully at some point in October).

What is the rationale behind requiring KN95 masks? Did something bad happen?

No, nothing bad happened! UMB’s transition to a KN95 mask requirement is a proactive, preventative measure, not a reaction to a problem or heightened risk. The campus has very high vaccination rates and masks further reduce the risk of transmission. UMB believes that KN95 masks offer greater protection for the wearer than cloth masks and are one more layer of safety in our classrooms.

Is the COVID fund still available for students who are unable to purchase KN95 masks?

Yes, but that should not be necessary. The campus and the law school are in the process of obtaining large quantities of masks to distribute to students. While UMB will eventually require KN95 masks in the classrooms, this will not happen until we have masks available for distribution to students. KN95 masks are disposable so we are evaluating how many masks will be needed to get us through the remainder of the semester and exams.
If UMB institutes a requirement for KN95 masks will contact tracing stop?

No, the campus will still do contact tracing if there is a high risk exposure to someone who tests positive. The campus does not consider sitting with other masked students in classrooms to be high risk.

What is the hotline process?

If you feel ill or have any concerns about potential exposure to COVID-19, please call the hotline at 1-800-701-9863. Your professors will understand, and want you to prioritize your own health and help to reduce any risk of transmission on campus. Dean Gontrum can help you with any concerns bgontrum@law.umaryland.edu.

What happens if I test positive for COVID19?

If you test positive, please take care of yourself and follow the instructions of the Hotline’s nurse case manager. She will help you navigate the process, including how long to stay away from school and help you with any medical concerns. Dean Gontrum is likely to check on you to make sure you are ok and help you to coordinate with your professors. As is true in all health situations, students who need help can reach out to the Office of Student Affairs for assistance.

Do students need one or two PCR negative results to return to the building?

It could be either. The nurse case manager makes that recommendation based on several different factors – whether the student is experiencing symptoms, the amount of time that has passed after an exposure, the degree of risk, etc.

How long will I have to quarantine if I have been exposed to someone who tested positive?

Again, this is case specific based on the amount of time since the exposure and the nature of the exposure.

If the nurse case manager advises me to quarantine, is this an excused absence?

Yes, this is an excused absence. If you are able, you should reach out to your professors and let them know you have been instructed not to attend class. Once you call the Hotline, Dean Gontrum receives notification and keeps a record in case there is any question from faculty members about attendance. Again, your professors want you to prioritize your health and follow the directions of medical professionals.

What if I do not have any symptoms?

Because it is possible to transmit COVID even if you have no symptoms, the case managers will recommend self-isolation prior to testing after exposures. They may recommend a shorter isolation time than might be recommended for a student who has symptoms.

What is the notification process?

Dean Gontrum receives a copy of the notice sent by Student Health to the student. She reaches out to the student to see if they need help notifying their faculty and keeps a record of the excused absences in case the faculty member has a question either at the time or later in the semester.
Can I see how many cases we have in our school?
No. The campus reports the number of positive cases by week for the entire campus but does not break it down by school. The campus figures are found by accessing the main campus COVID page and scrolling down the initial page.

What if I want to know if someone in my class(es) has tested positive for COVID?
This is private health information that will not be shared.

Will the law school regulate weekend activities/non-school related activities that are inconsistent with state and CDC guidelines?
No, the law school will not regulate weekend/non-school activities. We only get involved if the activity somehow spills over into the educational mission.

Will students “get in trouble” for hosting small gatherings or going out?
No, students will not “get in trouble” for hosting small gatherings or going out. The law school does not police what you do in your own time. We urge you to be careful in this COVID environment to keep our community as safe as possible, by wearing masks and taking other measures to minimize risk. If you are exposed to COVID or test positive due to outside activities, please cooperate with the contact tracing process to minimize the risk. The goal is keep everyone healthy and minimize the spread of COVID, not to get anyone in trouble.

How far in advance will we know if our school returns to remote learning?
There is no thought of returning to remote learning, and we do not anticipate this will be necessary given all of the steps UMB has taken to minimize risk.

Would a remote learning decision be a campus wide decision?
The campus made that decision last year but that was in an environment without vaccines and without extensive knowledge and experience with how to operate safely in the midst of COVID. UMB is strongly committed to the continuation of in person learning. A return to remote learning is not being considered at this time.

If the school reaches a certain amount of COVID cases will we go remote?
This is unlikely, given our highly vaccinated campus and collective commitment to wearing masks. While we can’t say it’s impossible that the school or particular courses could go online for temporary periods should an outbreak occur, it is extremely unlikely that we’ll need to revert back to complete remote learning. If we experienced a substantial number of cases (which has not happened), we would consider all of the circumstances and make a decision in consultation with the health professionals.

Will UMB provide us with boosters when they become available?
That is a topic of conversation but there is no current plan to do so. We will keep you updated if that changes.

Some professors are not recording classes. How do we make up work in those classes?
We are aware that a few professors have chosen not to record their classes, and clinic classes are not recorded due to client confidentiality. Because adhering to the COVID protocol clearly creates an excused absence we will remind the faculty that they have an obligation to ensure that students are able to effectively make up the class. If you have concerns about a particular class, you should contact Dean Eisenberg.

**Is it possible to livestream classes?**

We have considered this but most of our classrooms do not have this capability, and it would require extensive changes to class technology and staffing. The class recordings provide the same content, albeit asynchronously.

**Will the law school have a hybrid option in in-person classes for students who are not comfortable coming into the building?**

No, in person classes will continue to be offered in person. This question has implications on the quality of the professor’s teaching and the learning for all students in the class, as well as for the law school’s ABA accreditation, which limits distance education credits. The hybrid format – in which most students are in the classroom and a few are remote – changes the pedagogical nature of the class from in person to remote and is substantially more complex (for faculty and technical staff) than fully online classes. Because we can safely offer in person instruction, in person classes will continue to be taught in person rather than in a hybrid format.

**While we know COVID is top of mind for many students, the SBA sent some other questions that students have shared:**

**Will the vending machines be fixed?**

Yes, two of our vending machines have experienced errors. The vendor is aware and actively working to correct the issues.

**Can the filler stations at water fountains that are on red be fixed?**

Most of the filler stations are now green but we’ll continue to monitor this.

**Is the café closed for good?**

Our café vendor is making every effort to reopen but he is having staffing issues. It will reopen as soon as there is sufficient staffing.

**What is available for evening students to eat or get coffee after 5 pm since Panera is also closed?**

Hopefully Panera will reopen for evening hours – perhaps when the Hippodrome starts having shows again which will be sometime this fall. We are looking into installing a coffee vending machine.

**Can we improve shuttle service? Students say shuttles are inconsistent, scarce, and never on time.**

We are hearing a lot about the shuttles. They recently changed the time of the evening 9:00ish shuttles specifically to give law students more time to catch it after our 9:35 classes end. They have not updated that schedule on their website yet so that may be one issue. We know this is coming up at the USGA meetings but we’ll also raise the concerns with the campus.
Please consider having UMB police around the law school campus for release of evening classes (8:30 and 9:30 pm).

We shared this request with UMB’s police leadership and Deputy Chief Ellis confirmed today that we can soon expect to see an increased police presence around the law school building on Monday – Thursday evenings around 8:30 and 9:30 pm.

**Can we petition UMB to allow student parking passes to work all day at the Grand Garage?**

As a practical matter the garage is full in large part with hospital visitors and hospital employees. Many of the law school faculty and staff do not have parking spaces in the Grand. Students who have a permit to park in any of the campus garages can move their cars to the Grand after 4 pm or come initially to the Grand if they arrive after 4 pm.

**Is there a way to access the COVID updates?**

Yes, they are archived on our website on this page: [https://www.law.umaryland.edu/Current-Student-Resources/Announcements/](https://www.law.umaryland.edu/Current-Student-Resources/Announcements/). You can find UMB COVID policies, resources, and FAQs [here](https://www.law.umaryland.edu/Current-Student-Resources/Announcements/).