

Conversation Starters for Faculty and Staff

First, we should acknowledge that it is OK to feel apprehensive about potential confrontations with others not wearing masks or following social distancing guidelines. This is new to many and can be uncomfortable. As faculty and leaders we should still address behaviors that could have a significant negative impact on others.

It is also OK to address concerning behavior in your classrooms. Consider the notion that every person with whom you interact deserves your *positive regard* and your *assumption of good intentions*. Starting from these two positions can enhance your likelihood for a positive interaction and can help build a respectful relationship.

A good starting point is to identify yourself and share your observation and the reason for the need to confront.

“I notice that you are not wearing a protective face covering or mask...”

STEP 1: INTRODUCTORY APPROACH

Prof: “I notice that you are not wearing a mask. Are you OK? Do you have a mask at your disposal?”

Prof: “I notice that you are not [wearing a mask, practicing social distancing, etc.] ... Is there a reason why you cannot do this? [If YES] Have you obtained an exception?”

Prof: “I notice... I am concerned about your wellbeing and the health and safety of others in the classroom. Do you have access to a mask? Do you need assistance interpreting the guidelines?”

STEP 2: COMMUNITY STANDARDS AND IMPACT

Prof: “I notice... Are you aware that all persons are required to wear masks, follow social distancing, and regular hygiene guidelines to prevent/deter the spread of this deadly virus?”

Prof: “I notice... By not wearing a mask, your actions may negatively impact the ability of others to have a safe learning environment.”

Prof: “I notice... We all need to contribute to the health and safety of our community by wearing masks, maintaining social distance, and regularly washing our hands.”

STEP 3: EXPECTATIONS

Prof: “The Community Compact requires all persons to comply with the Community Compact (easy to find on the msu.edu website), which includes wearing a mask, following social distancing, and practicing regular hygiene guidelines to prevent/deter the spread of this deadly virus.”

Prof: “I need you to wear your mask in this classroom to help protect me, your classmates, and better control the spread of the coronavirus causing COVID-19. Without documentation of an approved exception, students not in compliance will not be allowed to attend class in person. Feel free to speak with me privately about ways in which we can all support our collective wellbeing.”

NEXT STEPS

The faculty member is responsible for the students in the classroom and for setting expectations for appropriate behavior. Repetitive non-compliance behavior is grounds for you to ask the students to leave the classroom. You can then work with your unit leadership to help find a more appropriate learning environment or to remove them from this course if warranted.

The Dean of Students Office and Residential Education and Housing Services student conduct staff are prepared to work with community members who determine that the initial approaches for addressing non-compliance issues with students are not working, and a student is clearly still perceived to be violating this directive. We will help you with filing a complaint and working through our student conduct system.