




University Academic Senate Executive Committee
of the Senate
Felix Ngassa, Chair 2017-21
Shawn Bultsma, Vice Chair 2017-21

Memorandum

TO: Philomena V. Mantella, President

FROM: Felix N. Ngassa, Chair, ECS/UAS 

SUBJECT: University Academic Senate (UAS) Assessment of the Face Covering/Mask Policy

DATE: 17 July, 2020

CC: Maria Cimitile, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
Shawn Bultsma, Vice Chair, Executive Committee of the University Academic Senate
ECS Members
UAS Members

The Executive Committee of the University Academic Senate (ECS), on behalf of the Faculty we represent, would like to thank you, President Mantella, for your willingness to maintain meaningful dialogue critical to successful shared governance during these uncertain times. In particular, we acknowledge your decision to enhance the university's face covering/mask policy in response to feedback and discussions within ECS representing the faculty at large. Our tradition of shared governance was in evidence this week as together with the faculty, staff, and senior leadership teams we have crafted a policy supported by the current scientific evidence, reaffirmed our commitment to an equitable environment for working and learning, and supported the university's vision of promoting the physical health of West Michigan.

We believe that faculty governance, if consulted earlier in the process of policymaking that concerns faculty, can continue to assist in crafting sound policy. Our institution is strongest when we work together, in true partnership with one another. Through our teaching, scholarship, and service, Grand Valley faculty embody the university's core values: excellence, integrity, inquiry, inclusiveness, community, sustainability, and innovation. We seek greater opportunities to engage with you, understanding that while our roles differ, genuine shared governance gives voice to concerns common to all faculty while also elevating the interests unique to specific, more vulnerable groups. We will continue to look for ways that our scholarly expertise and deep knowledge base may be used to advance our institutional goals. To this end, we recognize moving forward that continued and robust engagement between the University Academic Senate, Provost Cimitile and the Senior Leadership Team will be essential to ensure policies are based on the current knowledge about the COVID-19 virus to best protect the overall health of our community. We ask that you and the Senior Leadership Team ensure that faculty governance is included early enough in the flow of making policy to provide us all with the opportunity to fulfill the goal of shared governance.

Grand Valley is a diverse community, founded on the principles of liberal education. Our mission commits us to not only enriching the lives of our students academically, but also to preparing them to be leaders in their communities, our state, nation, and the world. Sound university policies implemented during this pandemic model the responsible, evidence-based reasoning that we impart in our teaching. As such, they reinforce the vision of our institution as a whole. As we work together to continue our academic mission, let us all reaffirm our commitment to contributing to the enrichment of society through excellent teaching, active scholarship, and public service. Shared governance is the most robust approach to creating a reasoned atmosphere of shared responsibility and concern for others that will provide stability for us all during this time.