

# ARKANSAS COLLEGES OF HEALTH EDUCATION

## COVID-19 Response Plan: Reopening for 2020-21 Academic Year

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### **President's Message**

The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education continues to hold the safety of our students, faculty, staff, and campus community members paramount. Together, we have been on a journey that saw our campus move to a remote-curriculum delivery in a matter of days. You have attended on-line lectures and taken part in telemedicine rotation experiences. You have participated in countless hours of Teams video meetings and classes. You have learned and worked remotely, been behind closed doors and away from one another for months. You saw our inaugural commencement ceremony on a screen. None of us have experienced anything like this before. The environment you created, both virtually and on campus, continues to inspire me. The dedication, resilience, and creativity you have demonstrated as we responded to the COVID-19 pandemic together allows us to shift our focus to the future to ensure the continuity of the ACHE mission.

Now, our journey takes us to the next step, which may be more monumental than the first. We intend to reopen our campus for the Fall 2020 semester.

In a few short weeks, ACHE students will join us and you who are among them will rejoin our campus community. This document outlines not only the steps we have taken to date, but also our plan moving forward.

1. ACHE commits to the health and safety of our students, faculty, staff, and community. ACHE closely monitors the COVID-19 situation following guidance from local and national authorities.
2. A robust safety protocol plan was enacted May 18 by the COVID-19 Campus Response Taskforce. These protocols include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Temperature screenings of all who enter
  - b. Restriction of ingress and egress
  - c. Facial coverings for all who enter
  - d. Restricted building hours
  - e. Increased sanitation efforts
  - f. Socially distanced lecture halls, meeting spaces, classrooms, and common areas
3. ACHE phased re-opening for faculty and staff beginning with essential employees and moved to restricted student access for essential business reasons only through the summer months.
4. The Colleges have prepared a variety of strategies to offer classroom and virtual instruction methods allowing professors and students to quickly pivot should the situation demand. New and dynamic technology is being installed in college classrooms allowing for interactive and high-quality instruction across programs. Personal protective equipment will be provided for all lab learning environments.
5. ACHE will hold a modified in-person new student orientation program for all new ACHE students. Delivery will be a hybrid of in-person and virtual events for ACHE students. Campus Housing has been modified adjusting roommate availability, and student clubs have new protocol for meetings and events.
6. Events and campus gatherings will be considered on a case-by-case basis with all safety precautions in place. Virtual social programming that began in Spring 2020, will also continue in Fall 2020.

Full details of this six-step plan to reopening are available in our reopening plan, [available on our COVID-19 Dashboard](#). We have learned quickly that this plan will be flexible, and we commit to adjusting as our situation demands. What we will not be flexible with is our commitment to you to continue pushing the ACHE mission forward. ACHE will endure, just as you have during these times.

We believe this plan will work and is the best way to ensure the health and safety of our campus community while continuing to offer the high-quality educational experiences our students expect from ACHE programs. I am optimistic that as we gather – virtually and in person – to welcome each other back this fall semester, we will be prepared and ready.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian G. Kim, JD  
President  
Arkansas Colleges of Health Education

## Overview

Arkansas Colleges of Health Education (ACHE) continues to hold the safety of our students, faculty, staff, and campus community members paramount. The past months have changed the ACHE educational experience in ways many had never imagined possible. We strive every day to provide the support, information, and education in the best way possible to ensure the ACHE mission endures.

ACHE is closely monitoring the coronavirus outbreak and following guidance from the U.S. Department of State, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Arkansas State Department of Health (ADH). The ACHE Coronavirus Taskforce is actively managing our readiness and response to the coronavirus epidemic. Health and safety continue to be the top priorities in our decisions and support. ACHE is continuing business operations for administration, faculty, staff, and students.

As fully described in this plan, ACHE formed its Coronavirus Task Force was formed in late February, 2020, and thereafter met weekly to address COVID-19 on the ACHE campus. The Task Force is comprised of representatives from all departments within ACHE, including infectious disease experts from among the medical school faculty whose continuing advice has been incorporated in developing this plan, along with guidance from national and local health authorities.

ACHE employees, students, and visitors are returning to the campus under a planned approach with their safety as our priority.

### Section 1: Health and Safety Campus Protocols

The ACHE Coronavirus Task Force held its first meeting on March 4, 2020, to ensure the continuity of operations and educational delivery in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The Task Force established guidelines for communications, member tasks, and goals.

The ACHE COVID-19 response protocols will be adjusted as needed in response to the ever-changing crisis. The protocols will remain in place, as long as the state's emergency declaration remains in place.

#### Behaviors for Mitigating Risk of Transmission of COVID-19

Be mindful of your distance in corridors, bathrooms, and moving into and out of classrooms and meeting rooms. When eating in breakrooms or the Student Cafe, please be mindful of your spacing.

ACHE requires all faculty, staff, students, and visitors to wear masks when it is impossible or impractical to remain six feet apart and to abstain from physical contact, including shaking hands.

ACHE requires all faculty, staff, students and visitors to protect yourself and others by knowing how COVID-19 spreads, by practicing hand-washing, avoiding close contact, and covering coughs and sneezes, as described by the CDC website “How to Protect Yourself and Others” at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

Employees are not to come to work if they are sick and should notify their supervisor immediately.

Students who are sick should request excused absence via the excused absence process with the Office of Student Affairs.

Where possible, desks or individual workstations should be separated by at least six feet.

Hand sanitizer effective against COVID-19 is available at appropriate locations when presented with a greater likelihood of contact with the public.

Soap and water are available to all students, employees, and the public in all restrooms and other hand washing stations.

All non-essential events and gatherings are being reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may be limited or denied upon request.

ACHE will comply with all public health orders and may prohibit or limit non-essential visitors from entering ACHE academic buildings. Students expecting visitors should contact the Office of Student Affairs prior to the visitors’ arrival for guidance. Employees should contact the Office of Police and Security prior to their visitors’ arrival for guidance.

### **Symptom Monitoring and Self-Assessment**

All campus community members are required to complete the ACHE Illness Reporting Form should they become ill. This form is available on the COVID-19 website.

ACHE honors the privacy of our campus community and has confidentiality obligations. Information will be safeguarded and used only for limited, health-related purposes, including to perform contact tracing or other activities to address employee and student safety. This information will be available to the President's Office and only key personnel, and will be held separate from employee personnel files or student records.

Body temperature screening is required for employees, students and visitors entering ACHE campus buildings. ACHE campus police will conduct temperature screening at designated entrances for each building. Anyone attempting to enter a ACHE campus building with a verified temperature above 101 degrees Fahrenheit will not be allowed access.

Arkansas Department of Health Discourages Entry Into Public Buildings if:

- You have had fever of greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit

- You have a cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, or loss of taste or smell
- You Have had contact with a person known to be infected with COVID-19 in the previous 14 days
- You are aged 65 or older
- You have chronic health conditions like diabetes, heart disease, lung disease and others
- You have a compromised immune system

### **Face Coverings**

ACHE requires anyone in an ACHE campus space (including campus buildings, campus grounds, shared laboratory areas, conference rooms, etc.) to wear a face covering at all times, except when alone in a private room, private vehicle, or when within 6 feet of another person.

Residents of campus housing are not required to wear a face covering around their spouses/partners/family members while in their own units, but face coverings should be worn in common areas of campus housing buildings. Face coverings must cover both mouth and nose. No campus housing will be provided for roommate living situations while the pandemic is active.

The ACHE campus face covering protocol is meant to supplement and not replace social distancing currently in effect at ACHE, which strongly recommends frequent handwashing and maintaining a six-foot distance from others.

Cloth face coverings such as bandanas, neck gaiters, scarves or other household items ideally should be made of washable materials so they can be kept clean and reused, as recommended by the CDC and other public health agencies. Typically, these cloth coverings should be washed daily.

ACHE employees, students and visitors will be provided face coverings, as needed.

Face coverings or masks are not a substitute for social distancing and should be used in conjunction with physical distancing when possible.

### **Social Distancing Protocol – Mitigating Risk of Transmission**

In various areas on campus you will notice social distancing signs. You may occasionally be reminded by colleagues to maintain distance when speaking to one another. Please take this as a gentle reminder for your well-being and for that of the person next to you.

In classrooms and meeting rooms, you may notice reserved seats or chairs distanced more than usual. Please do not remove reserved or 'marked' seats and do not put seats close together.

Be mindful of your distance in corridors, bathrooms, and moving into and out of classrooms and meeting rooms. When eating in breakrooms or the Student Cafe, please be mindful of your spacing.

ACHE requires all faculty, staff, students, and visitors to remain six feet apart, whenever possible, and abstain from physical contact, including shaking hands.

ACHE requires all faculty, staff, students and visitors to protect yourself and others by knowing how COVID-19 spreads, practicing hand-washing, avoiding close contact, and covering coughs and sneezes, as described by the CDC website 'How to Protect Yourself and Others' at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

Employees are not to come to work if they are sick and should notify their supervisor immediately.

Supervisors of employees who have reported illnesses with COVID-19 related symptoms prior to coming to work shall notify the Chief Operations Officer and Human Resources department via email.

Employees who become ill while at work, with COVID-19 related symptoms, shall immediately contact their immediate supervisor. The employee's supervisor shall notify the Chief Operations Officer and Human Resources department via email.

Students who are sick should request excused absence via the excused absence process with the Office of Student Affairs.

Where possible, desks or individual workstations should be separated by at least six feet.

Hand sanitizer effective against COVID-19 is available at appropriate locations when presented with a greater likelihood of contact with the public.

Soap and water are available to all students, employees, and the public in all restrooms and other hand washing stations.

All non-essential events and gatherings are being reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may be limited or denied.

ACHE will comply with all public health orders and may prohibit or limit nonessential visitors from entering ACHE academic buildings. Students expecting visitors should contact the Office of Student Affairs prior to the visitors' arrival for guidance. Employees should contact the Office of Police and Security prior to their visitors' arrival for guidance.

### **Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting**

Enhanced cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting will be closely managed by the Director of Buildings and Grounds. Schedules for the sanitation of common areas in buildings include study areas, cafes, bathrooms, classrooms, and teaching laboratories.

Hand sanitizer and other supplies, such as dispensers or wipes, will be in public areas and made available to staff to disinfect keyboards, desks, telephones, and other office equipment.

Classrooms/Teaching Labs/Library/Public Spaces cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting will be done daily by the evening and overnight staff and day staff will clean/disinfect high touch areas throughout the day.

All cleaning protocols will be developed and adapted based on current CDC guidance about cleaning and disinfecting to reduce transmission.

### **Procedure for On-Campus Outbreak**

In the event of an on-campus COVID-19 outbreak, ACHE will follow its established guidelines and work in coordination with ADH for communicable disease response.

ACHE will cooperate with ADH for contact tracings and investigations.

Once a person has been identified as having COVID-19 and a contact investigation is started by ADH, all contacts for that person will be advised to contact their physician and advised to self-quarantine for 14-days.

ADH will be the agency to declare an outbreak.

## **Section 2: Return to Campus**

### **Priorities for returning employees to work on campus:**

- March 15-May 17: essential employees only
- May 18-June 1: phased-in return of all employees
- June 1: all employees report in-person, with the exception of those requiring accommodation under COVID-19 guidelines

### **Circumstances under which employees should not come to campus:**

Employees who are exhibiting symptoms related to COVID-19 illness.

Those who have had contact with others who have COVID-19 and are still within their 14-day quarantine window.

Those who, in the last 14 days, have traveled to a COVID-19 hot spot or international destination, as identified by the AHD or CDC.

Those who have recently completed COVID-19 testing with results pending or positive.

### **Phased Return**

**Phase 1: Bring employees back only as needed (Target Date: May 18 )**

Essential employees continue to work on campus.

A limited number of employees returned to campus to assist as needed with key activities to prepare for students to continue through summer rotation curriculum, summer programs, and the fall semester as identified by essential personnel. Units conferred with the President's Offices and COVID-19 Task Force members to develop plans according to their unique needs. Office of Campus Police and Security, and Facilities were notified of employee return and when buildings will be occupied to ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting of common areas.

Examples include: those deemed essential employees based on job duties in academic units, IT support personnel to prepare classrooms and respond to continuity of virtual delivery, Student Affairs, or Facilities.

**Phase 2: Employees and students return for essential business (Target Date: June 1)**

June 1: all employees returned to on-campus environment unless previously approved with Human Resources

June 1: students are permitted to reserve study space on campus in limited numbers

July 3: new students enrolled in the Summer Anatomical Sciences Preparatory Course are permitted to move into campus housing.

July 6: Anatomical Sciences Preparatory Course begins

July 13-19: MSB and OMS1 students move into campus housing (while family members domestic partners may occupy a single unit, non-familial roommate situations will not be permitted)

July 20-22: new student orientation for medical school

July 23: new student orientation for MSB students

July 24: first day of Fall semester for first-year medical students and MSB students

July 27-August 2: OMS2, OMS3, and OMS4 students living on campus move into campus housing

August 3: first day of Fall semester for second-year medical students

Official campus visitors were allowed beginning May 18. Official visitors include people invited to campus for a specific academic or business purpose.

Human Resources, in conjunction with supervisors, may consider whether there are employees with pre-existing conditions with demonstrated performance who may be able to carry out their functions effectively via telecommuting, consistent with efficient campus operation and ACHE policies.

*Note: third-and fourth-year medical students attend year-round clinical rotations off campus. These students, when permitted by clinical assignment, continue instruction in a clinical environment. Students not permitted in the clinical environment continue virtual instruction including, but not limited to, telemedicine with clinical partners.*

### *Research Continuity*

Research continued in lab area with social distancing employed, facial coverings at all times, and enhanced sanitation.

## **Section 3: Return to Academics**

ACHE is preparing for a variety of ways to operate during the Fall 2020 semester. Multiple strategies are being considered and could be implemented or modified as necessary as health conditions change, including the possibility of transitioning from one method of lecture delivery to another at any point during the semester as health conditions change.

One critical decision we made is to follow the academic calendar that has already been established. All instructors should design their courses to switch to 100% remote delivery at any time should circumstances demand such a transition.

### **Planning for Several Modes of Instruction**

Four curriculum content delivery options have been developed as follows. The College will proceed with Option 1 at the start of classes with all persons wearing facial coverings. Strictly adhering to the requirements of either the CDC or the ADH, Option 2 will be implemented only in the event that Option 1 is deemed not reasonable for teaching and training in a medical facility. Finally, Options 3 and/or 4 will be implemented, as necessary.

#### *Option 1 - Traditional Face-to-Face Delivery*

Classes will resume as scheduled in traditional lecture halls and classroom spaces with facial coverings required. Assigned seating in all lecture halls will be used for the Fall 2020 semester and will be re-evaluated for the Spring 2021 semester.

#### *Option 2 - Social Distancing Face-to-Face Delivery*

Lecture halls and classroom spaces shall immediately be adjusted to allow for social distancing plus wearing of facial coverings. Enhanced technology shall allow for streaming lectures between multiple classrooms and buildings and to those who may be in a quarantine situation at home. Assigned seating in all lecture halls will be used for the Fall 2020 semester and will be re-evaluated for the Spring 2021 semester.

#### *Option 3 - Online or Remote Delivery*

Faculty are preparing content that is appropriate for social distancing face-to-face delivery as well as virtual streamed delivery in remote situation. Video capture will still be employed allowing students access to past lectures for review purposes.

#### *Option 4 - Create a blended approach (in-person/remote)*

Students are segmented by year in program and assigned certain lectures to be attended remotely in another classroom or lecture hall contemporaneously while others will be attended

on-site in our social distancing face-to-face delivery option. This allows for distancing across the campus and campus access to all students while still ensuring our safety protocols remain.

### *Labs*

All lab courses offered for medical and health professions students require close and hands-on learning exercises. Masks will be worn for all activities. In addition, appropriate PPE (gloves and/or gowns) will be provided to students during lab activities. Hand sanitizers will be required to be applied before putting on gloves when necessary.

Labs are conducted in the Standardized Patient Center (SPC), Anatomy Lab, Simulation Center (Sim Center), and Osteopathic Manipulative Treatment (OMT) Lab. The curriculum in each of these labs is designed to simulate real patient encounters requiring close personal contact. Accordingly, students will be provided with appropriate PPE in all lab courses as follows:

SPC – Students will wear masks. Gloves will also be worn for 1-1 patient encounters as would normally occur in a medical office visit.

Anatomy Lab – Students will wear masks, gloves, and lab coats during lab sessions (dissection and prosection). The ventilation in the anatomy lab completely circulates fresh air every five minutes. Therefore, particulates in the air are expelled from the lab continuously.

Sim Center – Students will wear mask. Gloves and/or protective gowns will be worn when indicated by the simulated surgical and other hospital clinic settings.

OMT Lab – Students will wear masks to perform manipulation on each other to simulate real patient encounters.

In the event circumstances change to require cessation of 1-1 encounters, lab curriculum may have to be postponed until a later stage in the students' medical education depending on the severity of the circumstances.

### *Advising, Tutoring, Wellness Counseling, and Student Meetings*

*Virtual Meetings:* faculty and staff are encouraged to engage in Microsoft Teams meetings for one-on-one advisement.

*In-Person Meetings:* when one-on-one meetings are required in person, social distancing and facial coverings will be observed.

*Tutoring and Small Group Advisement:* Students are strongly encouraged to tutor and meet via Microsoft Teams.

## **Section 4: New Student Programs, Registered Student Organizations, and Campus Housing**

### **New Student Programs**

During orientation, all activities will be conducted under the traditional in-person orientation process described below, consistent with all of the safety protocols reflected above. If circumstances change, modified protocols described below will be implemented immediately.

*Traditional In-person Orientation:* this program option will offer in-person orientation sessions with facial coverings required except during group meals. Boxed lunches will be provided, and students will be encouraged to eat socially distanced when possible. Large social gatherings will be held outside, weather permitting.

*Modified in-person orientation:* this program option will offer in-person orientation sessions using the socially distanced classrooms and streamed content to all rooms used and those in a quarantine situation. Lunches will be boxed meals with small-group assignment in socially distanced locations throughout campus. Lunch groups will be monitored. Large social events will be postponed or held in a socially distanced format outside, weather permitting.

*Virtual Orientation:* this program option will offer all orientation sessions virtually. No meals will be served. Large social events are postponed or canceled.

### **Registered Student Organizations and Clubs**

ACHE has created a plan for virtual interactions during new membership registration this fall. Fairs will be conducted virtually. Students will be encouraged to meet via Microsoft Teams. In the event an in-person meeting or approved event takes place, such as guest speaker or club elections, all safety precautions will be in place including, but not limited to, social distancing, facial coverings, and screening upon entry.

The maximum capacity for all public areas used for recruitment activities will be determined using these social-distancing guidelines.

### **Campus Housing, Fit Lab, and Pool**

1. Campus Housing – Unless a housing contract has been signed before the impact of COVID-19, ACHE has determined that it will not permit student-to-student roommate arrangements. ACHE will honor all legal obligations under the student housing contract in which roommate arrangements have been made. Multi-person occupancy will be permitted for family/domestic partner units only. Non-familial roommate situations will not be permitted. All applications for campus housing may be performed virtually. All check-ins will be conducted virtually.
2. ACHE Fit Lab – The ACHE Fit Lab opened on July 2. Under the Governor’s current Executive Order, all exercise facilities must adhere to limited capacity operation. The

ACHE Fit Lab will comply with the Executive Order until further notice. The ACHE Fit Lab will replace the current fitness facility in The Residents, which will be remodeled into an exercise studio (e.g., yoga, etc.) without fitness equipment (e.g., weights, etc.).

3. Swimming pool – ACHE expects to permit use of the swimming pool located in The Residents. However, the pool may not be opened and/or operated until inspected and approved for operation by the City of Fort Smith following certification by a swimming pool contractor.

### **Section 5: Events and Gatherings**

All campus events will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Approved events are to be held in accordance with all College, state, and health department guidance for gatherings, potential social distancing, capacities, and use of face coverings. Hours of occupancy for facilities and spaces may be modified or staggered to limit group sizes and ensure proper distancing.

Large gatherings are discouraged and may be denied upon request. Online and virtual events are encouraged.

All campus common and academic spaces will see increased sanitation protocols and enforcement of social distance practices.

### **Section 6: Travel**

Beginning March 15, 2020, the College imposed a travel restriction on all employees and students. The travel restriction has been rescinded with a new travel policy, as described below.

Between March 15 and June 15, if an employee or student were to travel outside Arkansas, the traveler was required to self-quarantine upon his or her return to Fort Smith before re-joining the campus community.

As of June 15, in preparation for receiving students from across the United States, the College has revised its travel policy to require all travelers to submit a self-health assessment certifying that the individual:

- Has not had contact with any person who was infected with COVID-19 in the last 14 days before arriving in Fort Smith; and
- Has not had symptoms of COVID-19 in the last 14 days before arriving in Fort Smith.

The self-health assessment will also require individuals to document whether they had traveled to a COVID-19 hot spot or have had visitors from a hot spot area. Depending upon each individual's circumstances of travel or visitor, an individual may be required to self-quarantine for 14 days upon return from a hot spot area or following a visit by an individual from a hot spot area.

Upon return to the campus community, each person entering the campus facilities is checked for fever, must clean their hands with an approved cleanser, and must wear a face covering when appropriate inside campus facilities.

### **Additional Resources:**

For campus-specific messages, updates and FAQ on COVID-19, visit our [COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

Questions? Contact Office of Student Affairs (479) 308-2200.

CDC Groups at Higher Risk for Severe Illness: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/groups-at-higher-risk.html>

CDC Who Needs to Take Extra Precautions: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html>

ADH COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS:

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/covid-19-guidance-for-high-risk-individuals>