AUGUSTA TECHNICAL COLLEGE
ESTABLISHED 1961

COVID-19 STUDENT FAQ'S

December 2020

Dr. Jermaine Whirl, President

What are my options for Spring 2021 Enrollment?

- o Return to campus
- o Enroll in Augusta Technical College courses already available online

How will I complete internships/practicums/clinicals?

Consult with your instructor.

How do I attend a lab-course and maintain 6 feet of social distancing?

Consult with your faculty regarding specific expectations in labs. Because labs are highly experiential and often in enclosed spaces, a mask/face covering is required.

What happens if Augusta Technical College moves to online only after the start of the semester?

Augusta Tech's Spring 2021 instructional plan is currently designated as hybrid (a combination of online and in-person course offerings). If this changes, students will be notified by their faculty members.

What should I do if I don't have a laptop?

If you need a loaner laptop or additional technology support, please complete the [Student Laptop Lending Application](#) on the website under *Student Resources > Student Documents and Forms*.

What are some actions the college is taking to reduce the spread of COVID-19?

The safety of our staff, faculty and students is the top priority when we return to campus for Spring 2021.

To that end, the college will—among other things:

- o Implement recommended social distancing guidelines
- o Encourage good personal hygiene and safe cough protocol
- o Require personal protective measures like masks/face coverings while inside Augusta Technical College facilities/buildings
- o Add social distancing signage, including elevator signs and floor markers
- o Add additional rigorous sanitizing measures
- o Limit hours for some services
- o Install sneeze guards in areas with high student traffic; and
- o Install hand sanitizer stations in all buildings

What actions should students take?

For everyone's safety and wellbeing, students are encouraged to:

- Obey all signage and instructions regarding social distancing protocols for classroom spaces, teaching labs, and public facilities such as the library, bookstore, and café.
- Carry a mask/face covering at all times and wear it while inside Augusta Technical College facilities/buildings. Mask/face covering use will be in addition to and is not as a substitute for social distancing.
    - NOTE: For students, masks/face coverings are not required when alone in an enclosed study room, or in campus outdoor settings where social distancing requirements are met.
- Avoid person-to-person contact, including hugs and handshakes.
- Limit any face-to-face group congregations or assemblies where social distancing cannot be maintained.
- Practice good hygiene: Wash hands thoroughly and often. Utilize hand sanitizer dispensers. Minimize direct contact with campus equipment, surfaces, and spaces (doorknobs, light switches, devices, vending machines, etc.).
- Stay off campus if experiencing a fever or any COVID-related symptoms, or recently had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID until they can be tested and cleared.
- Speak up if they notice signs of strain on themselves or others. The college has resources to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for our students and staff. (See Cougars Care)

Who is considered a close contact?

Please refer to the CDC for a definition of a close contact.

How do I stay engaged in a course if I become sick?

Students experiencing symptoms should not attend class face-to-face. Students experiencing symptoms which prohibit them from online learning are encouraged to take time to rest and recover, and not expected to engage academically while ill.

If able, students can stay engaged in their courses online through *Blackboard*. Students are encouraged to contact their faculty member for further individual guidance.

What should I do if I become sick and have not been exposed to COVID-19 (to my knowledge)?

- Students who are sick are encouraged to take time to rest and recover.
- Students experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should adhere to the following protocols:
    - See COVID-19 Procedures on the COVID-19 Resource Page.
- Although you may not know you have been exposed, there is still a possibility that your symptoms may be a result of COVID-19.

What should I do if I come in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?

- o Students who have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 should adhere to the following protocols: See COVID-19 Procedures on the [COVID-19 Resource Page](#).
- o Students who have been exposed to COVID-19 will need to self-quarantine at their permanent home.

What should I do if I test positive for COVID-19?

See COVID-19 Procedures on the [COVID-19 Resource Page](#).

How will contact tracing work?

Currently, the Richmond County Department of Public Health (RCDPH) is performing contact tracing of any laboratory-confirmed positive COVID-19 cases. This means that if you are identified by RCDPH as a close contact of a confirmed case, they will notify you and they will provide you with specific guidance.

The Georgia Department of Public Health has prepared the following video describing the process of contact tracing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LANQADjaEY.

Faculty members are also using the daily sign-in sheets for in-person classes to determine when students were present in courses.

Are there restrictions for returning to campus from certain countries and/or regional hotspots?

Anyone returning from outside the U.S. and/or a regional hotspot for any reason – personal travel or otherwise – may be required to self-quarantine at home for 14 days and may be required to be tested for COVID-19 before being permitted back on campus, either for work or for study.

Faculty, staff and students who engage in travel outside of the US and/or to a regional hotspot and do not adhere to the requirement to self-quarantine may be subject to corrective action.

Are there any measures being taken in case of another wave?

Yes, the Technical College Systems of Georgia (TCSG) has created contingency plans in case the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic reaches levels deemed unsafe to once again continue face-to-face operations. One of the contingencies calls for a transition to fully online classes. The decision regarding which contingency plan will be followed will be made by Augusta Technical College in consultation with TCSG and the Georgia Department of Public Health and local county health departments and would apply to either a resurgence of the first wave or a true second wave (associated with the flu season).

Will it be mandated for all students to be tested initially for COVID-19 before they are allowed on campus?

At this time there are no plans for students to be tested before they may return to campus.

What should I do if I need help from the Student Success Center?

Academic support services are provided to Augusta Technical College students by the staff of the [Success Center](#) on the Augusta, Thomson, and Waynesboro Campuses, and at the Columbia County Center. The free services include tutoring, help with Learning Support and credit classes in English, Math, Chemistry, Physics, Engineering Technology, Introduction to Computers (COMP 1000), and help with writing assignments for any course. Assistance in getting started with the *Blackboard* system for online and hybrid classes, as well as in improving general academic skills, is also available. Students can walk-in or book an appointment for tutoring assistance in the Success Centers. To book an appointment, visit the Success Center website at [Success Center - Academic Support Services - Augusta Technical College](#) or click on the bookings link [Success Center Tutor Booking....Select Campus Location, Subject & Tutor (office365.com)](#). Tutoring on the Augusta Campus is located in the ITC/Building 1000, Ground Floor; tutoring at the Grovetown Center is located in Room 140; tutoring on the Thomson Campus is located in Room 124 and tutoring on the Waynesboro Campus is located in Room 169.

How will student activities/meetings work in the spring?

Although student activities and events are always encouraged to be virtual, we understand this is not always feasible. As we want to ensure an impactful student experience even in the midst of COVID-19, we will allow in-person student events/meetings, but only under the following conditions:

o   Attendance must be taken and sent to studentactivities@augustatech.edu at least two weeks in advance.

o   Masks/face coverings are required for all student events.

o   ask/face covering use will be in addition to and is not a substitute for social distancing.

o   In-person student events and meetings must take place on-campus or at a venue within the immediate Augusta area.

o   On-campus events and meetings cannot exceed any room occupancy guidelines for social distancing set by the Facilities Manager.

o   Off-campus event venues must employ all CDC physical distancing guidelines.

o   In-person student events and meetings are capped at 50 participants, including organizers, and must be planned with physical distance measures.

o   Outside guests are not allowed to participate in student events or meetings.

o   Events and meetings may employ an appointment schedule or rotation system if they need to accommodate multiple groups of 50 people.

o   Organizers must plan for at least a 30-minute break between each rotation for disinfecting purposes.

- Note: Activities and events involve programs in which the objectives and learning outcomes may be hindered if held virtually.

Are students required to wear masks/face coverings?

All students are required to wear an appropriate mask/face covering while inside Augusta Technical College facilities/buildings. Mask/Face covering use will be in addition to and is not a substitute for social distancing. Masks/Face coverings are not required when alone in an enclosed office or study room, or in outdoor settings where social distancing requirements are met.

What if a student is not able to wear a mask/face covering due to a medical condition?

A student unable to wear a mask/face covering due to a medical condition must contact the Office of Disabilities Services with medical documentation of his/her diagnosis to request an exemption from the mask/face covering requirement. The Office of Disability Services will assist students in informing faculty of their status.

How do I care for my cloth face covering?

Please refer to the CDC website for directions on washing cloth face coverings.

I am traveling abroad. Will I be required to quarantine when I arrive in Augusta?

Yes. Anyone traveling from outside the U.S. will be expected to self-quarantine in their Augusta place of residence for 14 days before coming to class.

Students who are required to quarantine because of international travel and will miss class days should reach out to their faculty members to provide notice of quarantine and any documentation they have regarding dates of travel back to the United States.

The Vice President of Student Services, Dr. Nichole Spencer, can also provide support with contacting your faculty members to notify them of your need to quarantine. Documentation will need to be provided to Dr. Spencer regarding dates of travel back to the United States. Dr. Spencer can be reached at 706.771.4035 or nichole.spencer@augustatech.edu.

International student information: For more specific details, see the International Students website.

What are the guidelines regarding travel for employees and students?

Augusta Technical College will allow certain travel during the spring semester with the following guidelines:

- Augusta Technical College prohibits all academic or work travel for faculty, staff, and students, without specific advance approval from the President outside of the United States through December 31, 2020.
- Augusta Technical College prohibits all academic or work travel for faculty, staff, and students, without specific advance approval from the President outside Georgia through December 31, 2020.
- All non-essential travel is prohibited until further notice.
- Essential travel is allowed if travel occurs within the state of Georgia. If travel is to occur outside the State of Georgia, approval must be received from the President.
- All faculty, staff, and students will be encouraged to take full advantage of virtual attendance for meetings.
- When faculty, staff, and students are attending approved, essential meetings that are hosted face-to-face, social distancing should be utilized during any in-person interactions.
- Augusta Technical College or academic-related travel (e.g., instruction, clinicals, internships, admissions recruiting) may be permitted within Georgia and the surrounding Augusta service delivery area (SDA) with the required approvals under existing college policies and must be secured in writing in advance of travel.
- Clinical rotations may be held outside of Georgia (and the Augusta SDA) for students.

What if I need to complete a medical or hardship withdrawal due to COVID-19?

There are two different types of withdrawals that may fit your individual circumstances. The procedures for either a medical or hardship withdrawal are outlined below. (Please note that quarantine for COVID-19 does not automatically qualify a student for a medical or hardship withdrawal.)

Medical. Students seeking to withdraw due to their own medical issues (which includes severe illness or complications as a result of COVID-19) must apply for a medical withdrawal. A medical withdrawal is intended for a student whose own medical condition prevents them from completing the semester. (That is, a student cannot medically withdraw due to a family member's medical status. They can, however, submit a hardship withdrawal.)

A medical withdrawal is a withdrawal from all classes for the semester and should include written documentation from the student's physician. An extenuating circumstance request for a partial withdrawal should include the specific courses the student wishes to withdraw from, and written documentation from the student's physician as to why the medical condition only affects these specific classes. Note that a medical withdrawal does not qualify for a refund of tuition and fees. Complete withdrawals are processed using the College Refund Policy. The College will follow the normal published policy and procedures for medical withdrawals.

Hardship. Students seeking to withdraw from classes due to a family member's medical issues or another hardship must apply for a hardship withdrawal. This includes hardships brought on by the COVID-19

pandemic. A hardship withdrawal is intended for a student who has experienced an unexpected occurrence (i.e., a crisis or other unavoidable circumstance) that would impede their academic progress. This unexpected occurrence might include the injury, illness, or death of an immediate family member; a fire or other personal disaster; a financial crisis (loss of job by the student or the head of their household); or an employer-initiated job change. Note that the possibility that a student will fail a course is not considered a hardship, and that a hardship withdrawal does not qualify for a refund of tuition and fees. Complete withdrawals are processed using the College Refund Policy. The College will follow the normal published policy and procedures for hardship withdrawals.

What measures will Augusta Technical College be taking to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19 as employees and students return to campus?

Since the pandemic began, Augusta Technical College has made a concerted effort to follow the guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), including adjusting to the changes to the guidelines as they have occurred. Augusta Tech continues to recognize the fluid nature of the situation and will continue to follow the guidelines, including changes as they occur. In keeping with the guidelines, Augusta Technical College will:

- Require all students, faculty, staff, and visitors to wear an appropriate mask/face covering while inside Augusta Technical College facilities/buildings. Mask/Face covering use will be in addition to and is not a substitute for social distancing.
- Require that students, faculty, staff and visitors practice social distancing.
- Provide information on safe practices such as handwashing, covering one's nose/mouth when coughing or sneezing, and staying home when sick.
- Install signage in campus locations to communicate expectations.

In addition, the Return to Campus Safety Plan outlines preventative practices that departments will be expected to adopt, and the plan identifies mitigation and monitoring practices and cleanliness and sanitation expectations to aid in ensuring a safe campus.

Will face coverings be provided for faculty, staff and students?

Yes, the college is distributing two cloth facemasks for every student, faculty, and staff member. In addition, students are encouraged to bring appropriate face coverings of their choice. Cloth face coverings are not medical-grade protective equipment but do provide an extra layer or protection to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling in the air and onto other people. Students will be allowed to pick up their two masks from central locations on our campuses using their student ID.

How often will vending machines be cleaned?

Vending machines will be wiped by cleaning staff multiple times per day.

Will the Cougar Café be open?

The Cougar Café will be open in accordance with the current CDC guidelines for social distancing, sanitation, and personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements. The following procedures will be observed:

- Social distance occupancy with marker locations in seating and ordering areas
- Single entry door with directional arrows as well as spacing markers
- Single exit doors with directional arrows as well as spacing markers

Am I allowed to remove my mask/face covering while in the Cougar Café?

Yes, masks/face coverings can be removed while **dining** in the Cougar Café. However, masks/face coverings must be worn at all other times (i.e., ordering, waiting in line, paying for meal, waiting for a friend, etc.).

What are our policies, practices, and guidelines regarding disinfecting surfaces in the Cougar Café?

No more than two customers are allowed in the ordering line at a time. Once the order is placed, the customer is given one copy of the receipt; the other copy is retained by the cashier (customer's name is written on the receipt). The customer is then directed to the seating area while complying with the seating signage instructions. No more than ten (10) customers will be allowed in the waiting/seating area in order to maintain social distancing. When the order is ready, the customer will be called, and the order will be place on a neutral serving counter for them to retrieve. The counter is sanitized between each customer's contact and randomly throughout the operational hours.

All surfaces the customer touch is cleaned, including all objects which are potentially contaminated because of frequent high contact (e. g. door handles and countertops). Alcohol based sanitizers/surface disinfectants is used for cleaning purposes.

Employees are expected to adhere to basic food preparation practices, such as frequent handwashing and cleaning the area, wearing serving gloves, and wearing of face mask/coverings over both the mouth and nose areas to capture droplets caused by sneezing and coughing.

Cash/Debit Card Use and Precautions. Cashiers are required to wash their hands thoroughly for twenty (20) seconds after receiving cash from a customer. Employees may choose to wear gloves when taking debit/credit card/cash from customers as well.   The counter as well as the credit card keypad is wiped after each use. Additionally, employees must wear gloves, aprons and face masks at all times when serving customers and handling payments.

Can an external/outside entity or group host an event or meeting on campus?

No. Until further notice, campus spaces cannot be used or rented by outside/external entities.

Are visitors required to wear masks/face coverings when on campus for an event, meeting, or continuing education training?

All visitors are required to wear an appropriate mask/face covering while inside Augusta Technical College facilities/buildings. Mask/Face covering use will be in addition to and is not a substitute for social distancing. NOTE: For visitors, mask/face coverings are not required when the individual is alone in an enclosed office or meeting room, or in campus outdoor settings where social distancing requirements are met.

What steps are taken to clean areas where a positive COVID-19 case has been identified?

If a COVID-19 case is identified in your area, Custodial Services will provide additional disinfection of spaces where the individual spent time on campus prior to the onset of symptoms or his/her positive test. The process for requesting disinfection services varies based on that individual's role on campus:

- Augusta Technical College employees and non-college employees that work in campus buildings. The cleaning process is triggered when a case is reported to the Human Resources Department.
- Augusta Technical College students: The cleaning process is triggered when a student self-reports to his/her faculty member.
- If the individual is on campus when he/she develops symptoms, it is recommended that affected areas be closed off until Custodial Services can provide disinfection services, if at all possible. If the COVID-19 positive individual has not been on campus on the day that he/she develops symptoms or receive a positive test result, there is no need to close off any campus areas other than that individual's classroom. The high-touch points in the public areas of the building and in the departmental spaces should already have been disinfected by the combined efforts of Custodial Services and department staff as indicated in the preceding guidance. Custodial Services will provide additional disinfection of affected spaces once they receive the disinfection request.

What is my individual responsibility for cleaning and disinfecting the areas on campus where I learn?

Cleaning and disinfection of surfaces remains an important part of campus efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Interior surfaces identified as **"high-touch"** are disinfected daily by Custodia Services and include door handles, elevator call buttons, light switches, sanitizer dispensers, handrails, restroom fixtures, water fountains and vending machines. In addition to routine cleaning protocols, Custodia Services is available to disinfect campus spaces following identification of a COVID-19 positive case, with a focus on high-touch surfaces as indicated in CDC guidance.

Although Custodial Services works diligently to service all of the areas that need to be disinfected with greater frequency and in response to reported cases, everyone on campus has an individual responsibility to take steps that aid in reducing the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and protecting all within the Augusta Technical College

community. This includes the disinfection of frequently touched surfaces in their office, classroom, labs, and learning spaces.

Classroom spaces. A weekly schedule for disinfection has been established for classroom spaces, but Custodial Services staff are unable to sanitize classrooms/teaching labs between classes. Faculty and students using these spaces are responsible for cleaning these spaces between uses. To assist in that effort, spray bottles with disinfectant and microfiber clothes have been provided by Custodial Services and will be refilled and replaced as needed.

Teaching laboratories. Laboratory surfaces and equipment should be disinfected between uses and/or class sections as indicated by the course instructor.