



September 9, 2021

President Weaver and Provost Smith,

At this point in the pandemic, it is well documented that mask wearing is one of the most effective measures (after vaccination) that individuals can take in preventing the spread of COVID 19. Despite this, mask usage is disappointingly low on the GSW campus. The absence of masks is particularly disturbing as the CDC recommends that all persons wear them in areas with a high number of new cases. Both Americus and the state of Georgia are witnessing COVID infection numbers on par with—or higher—than any previous point in the pandemic. Moreover, with the upcoming holiday weekend, students will be traveling the region and returning to campus, increasing the possibility of community spread. *Simply put, if any moment in the pandemic called for mask wearing it is now.*

While a mask mandate would be the best way to ensure public health, at a minimum our leaders must model safe and responsible behavior. Despite the surge in cases on campus and regionally, it is troubling that virtually none of the administrators on campus wear masks with any regularity. While Dr. Weaver's emails about COVID list mask wearing as an effective preventative measure, he—and many other administrators—regularly appear in public and at indoor meetings without a mask. How can we expect our students to engage in behaviors to protect themselves and the community if the most prominent figures on campus are unwilling to put public health and community wellbeing above the image that things have “returned to normal”?

Therefore, we ask that in this public health crisis our leaders actually lead. This should include:

- Advocate for a mask mandate to the USG—the health of our community should take priority over the politics.
- We must make a greater effort to make masks, particularly multiple reusable ones, available to students.
- **All high-ranking campus leaders should wear masks to model the behavior that is recommended by the CDC, AMA, ANA and other public health organizations.**

Masks will save lives in our community, so we ask the leaders of the campus to do everything they can to keep the students, staff, and community of GSW safe.

Signed,

United Campus Workers, Georgia Southwestern State University Chapter