

Arkansas State updates mask mandates

LOUIS WALKER

SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

Chancellor Kelly Damphousse announced a revision to the mask mandate in place at Arkansas State University campus. The new mandate removed the requirement for masks in most inside areas. However, the need for face masks while in classrooms will remain because this is an area that both students and faculty are in for long periods of time.

This latest change to the mandate was announced on Thursday Feb. 10 and came into effect on Friday, Feb. 11. The revision was enacted after monitoring of the campus' Covid-19 active cases which dropped from 120 on Jan. 19 to 17 as of Feb. 11.

Bill Smith, Arkansas State's Chief Communications Officer emphasized the Chancellor's message when he said "We need to all be welcoming of those who wish to continue masking. That person may have a personal health reason to continue wearing a mask or have a close family member they are trying to protect by being cautious in public."

The update to the mask mandate received mixed opinions from the student population. Elijah Ritter, a junior business administration major from Paragould, said "I think it is much like the previous mandate. Completely stupid. It makes no sense." He

went on to add that the only change this announcement will make is allowing students to walk into the Red Wolf Center without a mask.

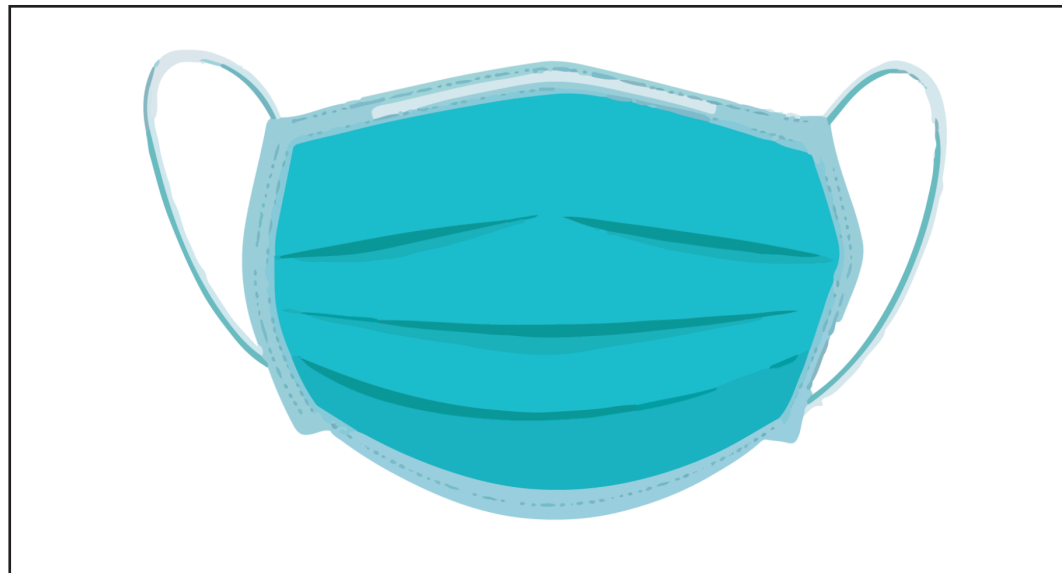
However, David Harris, a sophomore pre-professional biology major from Paragould, said "I personally think it's hasty. I believe he (Chancellor Kelly Damphousse) makes very good decisions for our school but I think it should be all or nothing. Either keep the masks ... or lift the mandate entirely."

Ellie Mayberry, the Student Government Association President, felt that the new policy reflected the situation on campus as cases continued to decline. She added "It sends a strong message to the campus community that we are trying to get back to normal and helps encourage students to continue to pick up activity and involvement on campus."

Use of appropriate masks along with vaccinations was shown to impact the transmission of Covid-19 but Ritter said that the mask mandate was not enforced except for in the classroom where some students remained unchallenged without masks.

Mayberry also said that enforcement of the old mask mandate definitely varied with some areas following it "exactly as intended" and others being "more relaxed on it."

Harris also added that attending classes in person "is absolutely necessary" and



COVID-19 UPDATE FEBRUARY 14, 2022

	CASES		TESTING	
	Total	Change from Yesterday	Total this month	Results from Yesterday
TOTAL CASES:	807,711	+834	PCR: 60,310	1,938
TOTAL ACTIVE CASES:	16,279	-2,886	ANTIGEN: 27,793	248
TOTAL DEATHS:	10,097	+32		

Graphic by Monica Gerges | Graphics Editor

that his professors always enforced the mandate.

A part of Arkansas State University's Covid-19 policy that has not changed is that regarding positive tests. These remain down to the individuals to report so they can then be assisted by the Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT) during

their individual isolations. It measures like this that mean A-State is reliant on individuals to protect others.

Chief Communications Officer Bill Smith said how it is important to be considerate and to stay home if you are ill. "One of the great lessons learned from the pandemic is the idea of coming into class or work

and "powering through" illness is neither good for individuals or others around them."

Chancellor Damphousse reiterated in his statement that the current mask policy will be reviewed again in the coming weeks and that they are open to student and faculty feedback on the current mandate.

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A-State Student Wins Miss Black and Gold Arkansas "Be yourself and own it"

JONATHAN SCHAUFLE

ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER

While winning the local pageant, Miss Black and Gold A-State has now gone on to claim the title of Miss Black and Gold Arkansas.

Jessica Hiley, a 22-year-old senior interdisciplinary studies major from Marion, holds the title of Miss Black and Gold Arkansas. Hiley is highly involved on campus and is currently the vice-president of student diversity and recruitment, president of the Minority Association of Humanical Students, a resident assistant, an Arkansas bio science student researcher and volunteers at St. Bernard's Hospital as a patient ambassador. After graduation she plans to attend medical school.

Hiley entered the pageant with no intention to win but simply for the experience. "I wasn't expecting it (winning) at all," Hiley said. "I joined this pageant for the experience and just to challenge myself and try something new. I knew that win or lose, I still won at the end of the day because this experience was one of the best I've ever had."

The Miss Black and Gold pageant is geared around highlighting young women. Allowing them to exercise their talents and show themselves as scholars and women. It consists of many different portions such as the introduction dance, active wear portion, couple dance, talent portion and final walk. For her talent portion, Hiley sang and performed "Sandcastles" by Beyonce.

Hiley competed against eight other women who all began practicing for the pageant back in the fall semester. Through the long preparation process and the many months of work, these women grew together and supported one another, Hiley even calling them her "sisters."

With her new title, Hiley is expected to fulfill certain duties following her crowning. After winning, Hiley is expected to continue to compete in the different level pageants. Two weeks ago, she competed in the Miss Black and Gold Arkansas district pageant and won the crown there as well. During spring break, Hiley will compete in the regional pageant in Tulsa, Oklahoma,

and hopefully will later be able to compete nationally.

With her reign Hiley plans to launch her initiative called, "B.U." This initiative is all about encouraging young minority individuals to become their best selves by education and physical and mental health.

Not only is Hiley launching her initiative but hopes to encourage fellow students as well. "Be yourself and own it," Hiley said. "Love yourself, be who you are, be open minded and try new things, go for opportunities." Coming to college Hiley did not plan to be the outgoing persona that she is today, but she discussed the moment she took a leap of faith and got out of her comfort zone. She was able to gain so many friends, friends that to her have even become family and urges other students to do the same thing.

Hiley is very grateful and humbled by winning these two titles and hopes to uphold the duties that come with them. As she continues her reign and continues to compete, she hopes to build her initiative and encourage students to be their best selves.



PHOTO COURTESY JESSICA HILEY