

Eastern will continue current masking policies

Corryn Brock, Editor-in-Chief

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Eastern will continue with its mask mandate regardless of a ruling by a Sangamon County Circuit Court judge that granted a temporary restraining order to over 140 Illinois school districts, allowing them to prohibit mask requirements.

Laura McLaughlin, Eastern's general counsel, said the ruling only applies to the districts named in the lawsuit.

"The temporary restraining order that was issued in this case is only specific to the defendants of the case. Eastern was not a defendant, it's not going to be specific to Eastern," McLaughlin said. "More importantly, though, the case is really about K-12. It's not about higher ed, and whether or not the executive order applies to higher ed or not."

Eastern's current on-campus masking policy requires all students, employees and campus guests to wear masks indoors in all buildings on campus.

Exceptions to the policy include when students are in their individual living space on campus or when employees are in their private offices.

As for non-compliance for Eastern's continued COVID-19 policies, **current policies** will remain in place.

It is unclear how universities will be impacted by an announcement from Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker that mask mandates could be widely lifted on Feb. 28 if COVID-19 hospitalizations continue to decrease.



Rob Le Cates

Taylor Iverson, a sophomore pre-veterinarian biology major (right) tests for COVID-19 at Eastern's Student Recreation Center Court 5 on Monday, Jan. 10, 2022. Eastern University President David Glassman sent out an email stating that "all EIU students and employees are expected to complete on-campus SHIELD testing upon their return to campus" for the spring semester.

McLaughlin said she advises University President David Glassman's President's Council and Eastern Board of Trustees and will be there to make sure any decisions made will be in compliance with state statutes and regulations.

McLaughlin said if the university were to change its policy, Glassman's judgment holds the most weight, but the university tries to follow science and public health guidance above all else.

"He's looking at all the guidance that we get, and the different restrictions that we have placed on us, and he, ultimately, will be making the decision on what the policy will be if it is changed," McLaughlin said.

Additionally, decisions would be made with consideration of existing collective bargaining agreements.

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