OVERVIEW: This document provides general guidance on the use and care of cloth masks. Based on recent guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, the University recommends the use of cloth face coverings that you bring from home in the workplace to help slow the spread of COVID-19. However, in situations where social distancing is possible, face coverings may not be necessary. Homemade masks made of fabric and cloth are not considered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). However, these masks can be an effective complement to social distancing, handwashing, and other mitigation measures.

WHY CLOTH MASKS? Cloth masks limit the wearer from spreading infectious droplets in the air by containing coughs and sneezes. When a cloth mask is not available, a scarf or bandana can be utilized. Using homemade or cloth masks will prevent those who may be infectious but only mildly symptomatic or non-symptomatic from spreading the virus to others.

RESERVE RESPIRATORS FOR HEALTHCARE AND REQUIRED OPERATIONS: N95 respirators and surgical masks are designed to protect those working in high risk situations with a likelihood of exposure. Medical-grade masks should not be used for “universal masking” once cloth masks are available.

GENERAL NOTES ABOUT WEARING MASKS:
- Remember this saying: "My mask protects you, your mask protects me." If you start to become ill, the purpose of the mask is to minimize the spread of germs if you cough.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Maintain physical and social distancing by keeping 6 feet of separation when possible. Continue to wash your hands often throughout the day for at least 20 seconds.

USE AND CARE OF CLOTH MASKS: Best practices for fabric and cloth masks are as follows:
- Wash all masks upon receiving. These are not sterilized.
- Wash the mask after every use.
- Wash in hot water with regular detergent. Dry completely on a hot setting.
- Before putting on a mask and immediately after removing, wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Ensure the mask fits snugly around the mouth and nose.
- Do not wear the mask if it is damp or wet from spit or mucus.
- Remove the mask from behind without touching the front side.

REFERENCES:
 Cloth face coverings can be made at home from common materials at low cost. The CDC offers written guidance as well as a how-to video. See: https://youtu.be/tPxlvyqjg4