

Tulane staff making adjustments to returning to office life

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The kitchen in the Newcomb Art Department administrative office is stocked with COVID-19 supplies. The water cooler and coffee maker have also been removed to minimize the spread of the virus. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Campus is looking a bit different lately for Tulane staff. With a mix of people working from home or on-site and those implementing a hybrid of both, life in the office is not quite the same, and those working on campus have had to adapt. Whether it be safely navigating around a shared office space or simply remembering to wear one's mask, there are important workarounds.

Some offices' shared coffee pots and water coolers have been removed or are banned for use to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19. But employees have not let that stop them from getting their refreshments throughout the day. Some departments have been stocking offices with individual water bottles, but many people bring their own water from home. Campus Recreation's Assistant Director of Fitness & Wellness Hannah Stiller says that the lack of a water cooler was a huge adjustment, but she has been able to make do with the Reily Student Recreation Center's bottle refilling stations.

"It just means I get in a few more steps in the day...not such a bad thing!" she said.

As far as coffee goes, some offices still keep a pot going or utilize individual cup coffee makers with very strict rules and constant sanitation to keep everyone using them safe. With PJ's and other coffee shops on and around campus, this has not been much of an issue for caffeine lovers. Some have even gotten individual brewers to keep in their own spaces.

The food situation is similar. While many people will pack and bring their own lunches from home, complete with utensils and condiments so as to avoid using items from a shared kitchen, food options on and around campus have been keeping workers well fed. Avian Washington, Facilities & Technology coordinator with Student Affairs, notes that meal preparation can be a huge inconvenience, "So I place my trust in the responsible hands of Sodexo—yum!"

However, perhaps the biggest new adjustment for employees is simply remembering to wear a mask when necessary. Washington notes that students act as a constant reminder to wear his as they have been very diligent in complying with Tulane's mask policy. Other employees keep spares in office drawers, bags, cars, etc. so that they will never be without one. Kedrick Forges, Loading Dock Master for the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life and The Commons, has a more creative approach: keeping his mask next to his keys, wallet and phone at all times.

"If I forget the mask, then my pants are lighter, I can't drive anywhere, and I cannot call or text anyone," he said.

Tulane's COVID-19 protocols and procedures can be found [here](#).