# Environmental Health & Safety

# Guidance Regarding the Use of Portable Air Purifiers to Address COVID-19 Concerns

As Western plans to reopen campus for the fall, the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) department has received multiple inquiries and requests for recommendations regarding the use of portable air cleaners. EHS does not generally recommend the use of portable air cleaners as a defense against COVID-19. In particular, air cleaners are not appropriate forsingle occupant rooms or offices.

The most effective defense is widespread vaccination, along with hand hygiene, face coverings, and ventilation with outside air. In certain situations, air filtration of indoor air may be an additional tool. However, there are many factors and limitations when considering the purchase of a portable air cleaner.

The **effective** and appropriate use of a portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/ filtration system to enhance air cleaning are dependent on several factors:

* Contaminant to be controlled. Air cleaners that have been proven effective at capturing and inactivating the COVID-19 virus are currently limited in number and expensive.
* Space size. The larger the room, the higher likelihood that more than one air cleaner will be needed.
* Space layout. Obstructions and distance can interfere with drawing air into the unit. DO NOT place air cleaners next to corners, doorways, curtains, walls, or furniture. Preferably they should be about 3 feet away from obstructions.
* Air distribution. Air cleaners should be placed away from open windows to provide the maximum protective benefit. Units should be pointed so they do not blow air across occupants (e.g., from one individual to others). Air cleaners should be placed on tables, desktops, etc. and not on the floor.
* Noise. How much noise is acceptable? Consider noise ratings as some units can be quite loud.
* Maintenance. Ensure adequate funds are available to maintain the unit. A sufficient supply and replacement of filters may be necessary to provide expected performance. While EHS is not able to service individual, department funded units, changing filters can be performed by following manufacturer instructions.

Due to the complexities and vast number of spaces on campus, EHS is not able to provide risk assessments, calculate the most appropriate number of air cleaners for your space or choose one for you. Instead, please refer to the guidance above when assessing if an air cleaner is appropriate.