Dear AS&E Instructors:

As you have heard, we have delayed the beginning of instruction until Monday the 23rd to give both instructors and students time to prepare adequately for online courses. This email has two separate sets of content to assist you.

Attached you will find a set of guidelines and suggestions for lab-based teaching.

Below, you will find more general information to ensure learning continuity for our students and information concerning other topics about which many instructors have raised concerns. It ranges from mandatory policy guidance to areas of challenges around which we are still working to identify solutions. We will continue to update instructors with policy guidance, answers to FAQs, and best practices as quickly as we are able to do so.

Policy on Recording Synchronous Zoom Sessions

Instructors will have widely varying instructional needs based on their courses and disciplines. The learning conditions of students will also vary widely within these courses. The general principle is that instructors should select teaching methods that work best for their teaching goals and their students’ learning needs. In doing so, instructors should keep in mind that many of our students will be learning in one or more of the following conditions:
1. Wholly without internet access
2. With barriers to internet access
3. Without internet-capable devices
4. With barriers to internet-capable devices
5. In different time zones
6. Under quarantine
7. Enduring illness

Given this, faculty may choose to offer synchronous Zoom sessions in their courses; however, these must also be recorded and uploaded into the Blackboard Panopto tool for students who will need to access them asynchronously due to the learning conditions above. This will guarantee learning continuity for all of our students. Note that Panopto automatically captions recordings for accessibility. All students have access to and familiarity with Blackboard, so it must be considered the mode of choice.

Even in small courses in which students are present and have excellent internet connectivity for a synchronous Zoom session, we still require video recording. Students and/or instructors may experience temporary interruptions in internet connectivity midway through a session even in those situations, especially given the volume of traffic on these services.
We are still determining best practices for students lacking any internet access. Zoom does have the capability for students to call in by telephone. This is a good option as the College explores other possibilities.

While a lecture delivered on Zoom, recorded, and then uploaded to Blackboard via Panopto can be an adequate way to deliver course content, the College strongly encourages the use of asynchronous tools such as the Blackboard Discussion Forum for collecting and responding to student questions about course content. A substantial portion of students may be unable to benefit from Q&A conducted via Zoom, even if that Q&A is recorded for later viewing.

Various units within the College are working on creating a Panopto archive of video documentation as a supplement to the written documentation on the Teaching During Times of Disruption website. New material will be added to these sites as it becomes available. There are also various training opportunities from teaching support staff.

Finally, the College is collecting information on the offers that certain telecommunications companies have made to extend free, uncapped, and/or reduced price internet to students during this time. This will also be posted on the Learning During Times of Disruption website.

Known Issue: Timing Out for Zoom Student Licenses for Peer Educators Only

IMPORTANT: This only applies to peer educators hosting sessions, not students attending sessions you set up under a staff/faculty license. IT was advised by Zoom that the student license restrictions on hosting Zoom sessions of a 40-minute time limit and three-participant cap had been lifted. CETL conducted a stability test of this assurance on 3/15/2020 with its peer educators. While the cap seems to be lifted (five students participated), the session timed out at 40 minutes. IT has been alerted and will be trouble-shooting. Peer educators who have already been provisioned with upgraded Zoom Pro accounts through IT will not be impacted, as they now have the same license as staff/faculty. CETL has ensured that all CETL-supported PLTL Workshop Leaders have been provisioned with Zoom Pro accounts.

Guidance on Course Schedules and Student Completion of Assignments

Although we are moving to remote instruction, our students still need us to adhere to the existing course schedule for synchronous instruction in any format so that they can continue to attend all of their classes. Exceptions to this policy will be rare and must document a rationale for deviation (e.g., all of the students in the course are in another distant time zone and free at an alternative time), as well as receive authorization from the AS&E Dean’s Office. Additional information about the petitioning process will be forthcoming shortly.

Some students may request to complete their coursework at a later date using our existing incomplete system, which permits us to extend the time during which students can complete a course by up to one year. This may particularly be the case for students lacking internet access or with inconsistent internet access. The College will be issuing guidance on how to assess requests for course grades of incomplete. In the meantime, we strongly encourage instructors to be flexible in due dates for individual class assignments.

Guidance on Requirement to Teach from Campus Locations
A previous communication encouraged instructors to teach from campus in order to access stable internet, IT support, and lecture capture Panopto classrooms. The rationale behind this guidance no longer holds in the current health context. The current guidance is that instructors should make decisions about where to teach based on communications from Human Resources and in consultation with their department chairs or direct supervisors.

Guidance on Credit Hours and Contact Hours

Please remember that instructors must adhere to credit-hour policies regardless of whether instructors select synchronous or asynchronous methods of instruction. Instructors may use their discretion in altering the “mix” of contact hours (e.g. interacting with instructors, listening to lectures) and out-of-class hours (e.g. homework, reading) based on the needs of the course in an online context.

Use of Computer Labs and Specialized Software

A solution for remote access to campus public computing resources is in the final stages of deployment, and information will be published on the Teaching During Times of Disruption website. This requires physically closing many on-campus computer labs but ensures course continuity for those courses that require resources only available through public computing resources (e.g., specialized software).

Academic Support Services

The Center for Excellence in Teaching on Learning will be transitioning all of its academic support programs to remote instruction and expects to resume all services on a rolling basis this week with priority given to the PLTL Workshop Program, Methods of Inquiry courses, and other credit-bearing peer education courses. The Writing, Speaking and Argument Program is also transitioning its academic support services to remote instruction and will reopen on March 23. Other academic support offices, including the College Center for Advising Services, Kearns Center, the Office for Minority Student Affairs, Greene Center for Career Education & Connections, Education Abroad, Undergraduate Research, and Fellowships will be open and available to students for “virtual” advising sessions.

Future Guidance on Best Practices

We hope to issue more information about pedagogy and best practices in the coming days. We actively encourage you to seek out information from your colleagues and disciplinary networks.

At this time, consider:
   1. Surveying your students about their learning conditions
   2. Expressing care and concern for your students on an ongoing basis
   3. Being as clear as possible about your expectations
   4. Being flexible with any assignment deadlines this week

The Teaching Continuity Committee will continue to update you on key issues.

Best,
ASE Leadership and Rachel Remmel, Assistant Dean and Executive Director, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (on behalf of the Teaching Continuity Committee)
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