

To: The Academic Affairs Division
From: Dr. Sanjay Rai, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Subject: Continuity of Instruction
Date: March 23, 2020

Welcome to the first day of remote teaching! A novel virus has caused us to respond in novel ways. The entire College community including faculty, staff, chairs, deans and faculty and staff leadership has responded in exemplary ways to minimize the impact on student learning. These spirited efforts, which include phenomenal work done throughout spring break, have paved the way for the continuation of teaching – for the continuation of learning. The unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19 have been met with an unprecedented response as we define our new normal, at least for the foreseeable future. You have been proactive in an unpredictable environment. You have all done extraordinary work in preparation for continuity of teaching and learning.

As we go forward, the remote environment may look and feel different. Be flexible. You are not expected to replicate the pedagogy of your face-to-face course remotely; the focus should be on achieving the learning outcomes in the new modality. I have every confidence that the transition will be successful, based on what I've seen. Just as some of you are learning to teach with technology, many students are also adjusting to this new learning mode while also facing challenges caused by COVID-19. Some may not have appropriate technology and access. Just as many of you are reimagining assessment of student learning, students are wondering how they will be assessed.

Remote Teaching Resources

The College is continuing to work diligently to provide resources to faculty and students as we migrate to remote teaching and learning. Guidance, best practices, and helpful resources are available on our coronavirus [website](#) and ELITE's [webpage](#). Because this is a very dynamic environment, information and resources will change. We will continue to provide the best information and access to resources possible. ELITE will continue to offer webinars, and I encourage you to reach out to your colleagues for best practices and assistance. Every dean has developed a [Continuity of Instruction](#) plan – just amazing work to which many of you contributed. These plans provide the names and contact information of lead faculty for every course.

Here are a few things to remember that will help you to prepare:

- You do not have to create a fully online course. Our goal is continuity of teaching and learning remotely. Set realistic expectations; focus on fundamentals.

- Work in stages. Add content in small blocks, giving you and your students specific content to focus on. It's okay to put content online one week at a time. It's okay to email, text, or Zoom with your students. Use the tools and resources available to you through ELITE and from your colleagues with online teaching expertise to support students through virtual connections.
- **Blackboard tools:** All courses have Blackboard shells, which allow students to have a consistent learning experience. Faculty can upload their already-developed materials into Blackboard and utilize OER and other materials previously developed and stored in the discipline's community site. Need help with this? Keep reading.
 - **Blackboard Essentials and Blackboard Essentials for Beginners:** Training dates for [Remote Professional Development](#) in the use of Blackboard and other offerings are posted. These will show you the tools and resources available through Blackboard, including tutorials by coordinators and faculty mentors who teach online regularly. You will learn how to post announcements for your class, post homework, and use assessment tools. Click on the link above for these resources and strategies.
 - **Blackboard Collaborate** webinars teach faculty how to use this videoconferencing platform within a Blackboard course, as well as how to use the Collaborate whiteboard and how to share multimedia. Use the link above to find the dates for training.
 - **Blackboard Assessment** training webinars are also posted.
- **Blackboard Communities and [Discipline Cadres](#):** Each discipline has created a cadre to support the transition to remote learning. This cadre may include the dean, chairs, common course coordinators, course coordinators, and faculty mentors who have online teaching expertise. Common Course Coordinators will gather the common materials for their courses; these are available in Blackboard communities.
- **ZOOM** is a platform for video and audio conferencing for communicating with your students. To set up an account:
 - Create Account by clicking on <https://montgomerycollege.zoom.us>
 - Click on the "Sign-In" button
 - Enter your MyMC ID
 - Enter your MyMC Password
 - Finally, Click on "Sign In" to complete your Zoom account registration
 - For additional help, click [here](#).

- **E-tutoring, including writing assistance**, for students begins today. Students will be able to receive tutoring and other assistance online. Please share this [information](#) about Virtual Tutoring with your students.
- **ATPA Support: Embedded Coaches and one-on-one coaches** have been provided with Blackboard access to continue supporting classes of students and individual students. Coaches will work with host faculty to ensure students know how to access Blackboard Collaborate or Zoom for scheduled study sessions.

Faculty who need course specific assistance can get support [here](#).

Timeline for the remainder of the semester: Many of you are wondering about this. As soon as final decisions are made about the ending dates for spring semester and how we will handle summer, this information will be communicated.

In closing, I ask that you *please* communicate to your students that you and the entire College are here to assist them. We want our students to complete the semester successfully. If you are new to remote teaching and using new resources, share that with your students. We have amazing students who want to be part of the solution.

We recognize that these are extraordinary times. However, we have amazing students who have shown perseverance and resilience throughout their lives, and they will now. And, we have you. I have great confidence in you and our students. I have enormous appreciation for what you have done already and for what you are prepared to do. Let me know how we can support you. We are in this together.

Remember, these are unprecedented times, be kind to yourself and your students.