

Subject: Monday Update - April 13, 2020

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From: Rai, Sanjay K

To: Rockville Faculty{FT&PT}, Germantown Faculty{FT&PT}, Takoma Park Faculty{FT&PT}, Academic Affairs Staff and Administrators

Colleagues,

Today, we begin our fourth week of remote teaching and learning. Over the course of the last few weeks, your efforts have provided hope, direction and certainty for thousands of our students during a very uncertain time. Your work and your continual efforts to engage students are being appreciated by students, and by me. I have no doubt that history will write a very positive note on your commitment and dedication.

I remain sincerely grateful and honestly humbled by your efforts.

With the option to end formal instruction in just three weeks, many of you have already been thinking about assessment and final exams in a remote setting. A number of areas have come up with some very innovative approaches to the assessment of student learning outcomes. While some of you will continue instruction during the second week of May, by designating May 4 – 18 for assistance and assessment, I hope that this gives you time and flexibility for non-traditional assessment that provides students with alternative ways of demonstrating mastery of course material.

Please remind your students of the tutoring resources available. Many are using them, but you and I always hear, too late, of some who did not know. Since March 22, over 1,500 students have used virtual tutoring (visit the [Dashboard](#) for more information about tutoring, as well as Blackboard usage, withdrawals for the same period last year, and other information). Students can sign up for [virtual tutoring](#) at any learning center and [ATPA coaches](#) are available.

For information about grades, please refer to the [memo](#) that Dr. Brown and I sent on April 7. Policies about grades have been vetted by the members of the Academic Regulations Committee, which is a subcommittee of Faculty Council and is a representative body of faculty, staff, and administrators. I appreciate the Academic Regs Committee members for their quick responses to the evolving questions about options that students will have in addition to earned letter grades: change to audit (AU), incomplete due to crisis (IC), and withdrawal due to crisis (WC). As in any semester, students who are unaffected by the crisis may also choose to drop a course with a W by April 19 or request an incomplete (I) grade in consultation with their faculty member. The best option, always, is for students to complete their coursework with a letter grade so that they can move forward. Thank you for all that you're doing to support students in completing their courses this semester.

The regulations regarding the WC and IC grades were finalized at the April 10 Academic Regs Committee meeting. Forms and procedures will be available through the Records and Registration Student Forms page. Please look for further information by the end of this week.

I am also learning of the strategies that many of you are using to bring the coronavirus into the remote classroom. Of course, as a mathematician, I found this very interesting: [7 Ways to Explore the Math of the Coronavirus](#). Others are exploring the chemistry of how tests for the COVID-19 work, and the

biology of this virus. Photography students have a photo essay project on life in times of COVID-19 and a research paper on two reputable photojournalists images on the pandemic. This is amazing creativity that helps students to understand what is happening on so many levels. These are lessons that will not be forgotten. Some of you have shared that your students are grateful for the opportunity to learn in a trusted environment, about these issues. Many are grateful for the opportunities you are providing to voice concerns. Thank you for your compassionate pedagogy.

I learned, too, that some biology faculty chose to read *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic* even before we understood how serious the impact of the coronavirus would be. I was so intrigued. I found this [review](#) and interview with the author, David Quammen. We are all learning so much.

We are all grateful to the heroes in our community. Each of you is a hero to me.

Sanjay