

From: [Summers, Greg](#)
Subject: Academic Affairs Update, 03-27-20
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Colleagues,

Happy Friday, everyone. I hope that amid all our work you've had a chance to peek at the sun today and to get some fresh air (away from Zoom!)

I'm writing with a variety of updates below, but first let me offer another thank you for all you're doing to prepare for the resumption of classes next week.

A Few Notes Regarding Teaching

Our colleagues at UW-Stout have resumed classes already, and they have passed along a few notes from their experience:

- Given the many variations in students' access to technology, asynchronous delivery has proven to be critical. Instructors are certainly free to continue working synchronously, but be aware that some students may be unable to participate. So please have a back-up plan.
- Remember that students are dealing with the same fears, health-related issues, and economic anxieties that we're experiencing. These could also impact their ability to participate at scheduled times.
- Given these issues, it's best to aim for equity in your approach to student learning rather than equality. Expectations for students may need to be adjusted for individual circumstances, and that's fine.

As an additional note, please be aware that the Academic Affairs Committee and Common Council Executive Committee have begun discussions about some temporary changes to our policy regarding Pass/Fail grading. If we do make this option more available to students, the faculty members, department chairs, and advisors charged with approving these requests will need to ensure that students understand the potential consequences on their future academic and professional goals. More information on any proposed changes will follow in the coming days.

Evaluation of Instruction

As we move to an online format, we have been receiving questions about whether we should continue student evaluation of instruction for the Spring 2020 semester since the results will be inconsistent with other semesters. These are valid concerns. However, given the possibility we may need to continue this format during the summer, conducting evaluations will provide valuable feedback on how we're doing thus far, and how we can improve. Consequently, for this semester:

- Instructors are requested to administer the student evaluation of instruction for their

classes. For those classes that would have typically administered the evaluation in person, they now need to do so electronically. If your department needs assistance moving to the online student evaluation of instruction, please contact Sean Ruppert (sruppert@uwsp.edu).

- The evaluations will not be used by departments or administration for evaluation in the retention, tenure and promotion process. However, if individual instructors wish to include them in evaluation materials, they may do so.
- Departments and deans should review evaluations and comments as constructive feedback on the change of modality in instruction.

If you have question or concerns, please contact Katie Jore (kjore@uwsp.edu).

Suspending the Tenure Clock and Post-Tenure Review

- Suspending the Tenure Clock. [UWSP 3.04 \(3\)](#) outlines the process for temporarily suspending the tenure clock and provides examples of circumstances which would make a person eligible. In addition to the reasons listed in this policy, the effect of COVID-19 on teaching, scholarship, and service will also be an accepted reason.
- Post-tenure Reviews for 2019-2020 Academic Year: Faculty scheduled for post-tenure review who have not yet completed the process have the option to delay their post-tenure review. Requests to postpone reviews should be directed to the appropriate dean. Deans should forward this information to the Office of Academic Affairs. If the faculty member wishes to complete their review, they need to arrange with their department to complete it given the current meeting restrictions.

If you have question or concerns, please contact Katie Jore (kjore@uwsp.edu).

Looking Ahead to the Summer and Fall

Given the evolving public health crisis, we are looking ahead to the summer and fall terms, and especially to our ongoing effort to recruit and retain students. Please know the following:

- We will likely begin making decisions regarding the modality of our summer courses as early as next week. It's impossible to predict what the public health situation will be in late May and June; however, we want to provide clarity to students, faculty, and staff so that we can plan appropriately.
- I hope we can delay any decision about the modality of fall teaching until June 1. Again, we will balance the likely uncertainties against the need for clarity in planning and preparation.
- We're working hard to reassure our incoming class of prospective students. Summer STAR sessions have been moved online, and we've begun planning what this will entail. In addition, we are drafting a message to students to reassure them that, no matter what happens with COVID-19, we will offer our full slate of courses this fall either in person or online. We believe this assurance is vital to our ability to yield the strong incoming class we have recruited.

Regarding the Longer Term

Some folks have expressed concern that our rapid shift to online teaching will somehow become permanent. Please be assured this will not happen. We are all building new skills and moving rapidly in directions we have discussed for years but not utilized broadly. As a university, we would be wise to think strategically about how these abilities might serve us well in developing new offerings that serve new groups of students, including adults. However, the core strength of our educational identity is now and will remain the personal attention we provide, the care with which we teach, and the engagement that we build into to our face-to-face instruction. COVID-19 will not change that.

Thanks very much. I hope you all take some personal time over the weekend to rest and recharge.

Best,
Greg

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(This message is being sent to faculty and staff members within Academic Affairs)