

**From:** [Summers, Greg](#)  
**Subject:** Academic Affairs Update, 10-15-20 (Please Read: Changes to Fall Semester Schedule)  
**Date:** Thursday, October 15, 2020 11:34:31 AM  
**Importance:** High

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Colleagues,

As I mentioned last week, we have heard increasingly worried messages from students, faculty, and staff members regarding the levels of anxiety and workload folks are experiencing in this unusual semester. Many of our students and colleagues are exhausted as we all juggle the needs of family, work, and community safety.

After consulting with many stakeholders in the past few days, we're seeking your help to relieve this pressure and demonstrate our values as a caring community. Your participation is crucial to help your students and colleagues.

#### October 19-23 will be COVID Check-In Week

The most urgent concern we have heard is that students are struggling to keep up with their academic workload and to feel engaged in their virtual classes, especially those that are asynchronous.

- Faculty and instructors: please take some time during this week and suspend your regular teaching for some portion of each class. (For those teaching asynchronously, you might extend deadlines and schedule a synchronous discussion.) Use this time to check-in with students regarding how they're doing and open the door to adjusting your syllabus or course expectations. Pausing in this manner can accomplish two things: it will send the message to our students that their well-being is our highest priority; it will also provide the "space" to address concerns they may have with course content, accessing materials, pending deadlines, and other questions that are critical to their success. This small pause may be key to student retention this semester and beyond.
- Common Council has agreed to cancel all standing committee meetings during the week, although the full council will still meet on October 21. This will give faculty and staff members additional time to catch up themselves and to reach out to students.
- Academic support units, Student Affairs, and SGA will also use this week for additional outreach to students.
- CITL will have additional availability to help faculty think through their Canvas usage or other concerns.
- Finally, please take note of the concerns you hear and any adjustments you make as a result. We will survey faculty and staff later this semester to gather input on changes we might consider for teaching and learning during the spring semester.

#### Wednesday, November 4 will be a No-Class Day

- Faculty and instructors should suspend regular teaching on this day to allow time for

everyone to catch up on work, assignments, and deadlines, and to create additional space to check-in with students regarding their progress and needed support.

- Common Council will cancel its scheduled meeting on this day.
- CITL again will have additional availability to help with Canvas and any post-Thanksgiving concerns.

I recognize that these interventions may cause difficulties in some classes, and I apologize for the disruptions this will create. Under normal circumstances we would never contemplate further reducing vital instructional time. However, this semester is anything but normal, and the kinds of concerns we are hearing have reached a level of urgency that demands a proactive response. I hope that we can work together as a campus community to address the concerns being voiced by our students and colleagues.

Thank you for your continued help.

Greg

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Greg Summers

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(This message is being sent to the Academic Affairs Faculty/Staff list.)