

My dear colleagues,

Thank you for the many positive and supportive emails. I am particularly encouraged by messages from faculty who have volunteered their time and expertise to help others. Well done.

Today, we are moving into polishing and filling our remote courses. It's a day for adding content and instructions and making adjustments, remembering to continue to add resources for students as we design and as we learn more from the college and each other. It's a day to be deliberate and slower than we might like, letting the urgency add to our focus.

This morning, Allison sent an email with Zoom information to add a much-needed tool to our communications. This afternoon, Adam Wandt from PAD (you may remember his FDD session on smart classrooms in January) will be offering a live webinar on using Zoom; this will be recorded and made available for those who are interested:

Here is the information:

Time: Mar 17, 2020 04:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/491254639>

Meeting ID: 491 254 639

All are welcome.

In partnership, the Department of Online Education and Support (DOES) has offered to answer basic Zoom questions. Feel free to reach out to the TLC or DOES for referrals.

To continue polishing and filling, I am sharing a request from President Karol Mason:

“We should aim for simplicity of access for our students, and not mandate synchronicity. As we discussed this morning on our call, faculty should be very flexible about the delivery of assignments once we convert to distance learning. There will be access issues and learning curves. Faculty also need to be sensitive to the privacy concerns of our students in their home environments.” Karol Mason

This statement comes in the midst of a discussion of student responses to a technology survey, in which many indicated serious difficulties with access to and use of technology as well as their own anxieties about learning new systems and maintaining safety in their personal lives. Below I have offered a list of questions for each element in Karol's statement. Please take a moment to read these and reflect while you prepare for Thursday.

For each component of your remote course, please test against Karol's requests above (which reflect UGS Dara Byrne's and CUNY Vice Chancellor José Luis Cruz's communications about our students):

Simplicity of access:

- What do students need to do to access the course and the assignments?
- Do they need internet access?
- A computer or laptop?
- A smart phone?
- Software such as Microsoft Office? Apps? Data storage?
- If a student is sharing a family smart phone and using a hotspot, how might that influence their participation and performance in the course?

Synchronous/asynchronous:

- Are you requiring your students to meet you virtually with everyone in the class present?
- Are you offering synchronous office hours?
- Can students continue participating and succeeding in the course without any real-time, synchronous contact?

Flexibility of deadlines:

- Which of your assignments, activities, and exams have deadlines?
- Do you have windows of flexibility for your deadlines (for example, how late is too late)?
- Do you have alternatives for students who are unable to turn in the required work yet still want to participate and complete the course (think about students without access to word processors or who have increased obligations due to the changes in circumstances)?
- What phrasing and tone are you using to communicate deadlines?

Access issues:

- Do your students have access to devices that will connect to the internet and support the software and apps needed to participate and succeed in their classes?
- Do your students have reliable access to the internet? Sufficient cellular data?
- Do your students know how to log in to Blackboard and other technologies you are using?
- Do your students have uninterrupted access to the devices they are using for classes (do they share these devices with others, are they using public spaces to find access)?

Learning curves (and the range of these):

- What does a student need to know to find their remote classes?

- What guidance (instructions, links, videos) are you providing to help students learn how to access and how to navigate their remote courses?
- What contact information for college support do you have to assist students in learning how to participate in your course (Blackboard, word processing, internet skills, webinar interactions, working across multiple technologies)?
- Are you communicating with your students regularly? Are you mindful about writing simple, specific instructions?

Student privacy (video, audio, email, chat, anywhere they or their information might be exposed):

- Where will students be participating in video and audio interactions?
- Will students be able to participate while respecting the privacy of others in their environments (remember, many of our students are immigrants and DACA and have safety concerns)?
- Will students' information be protected? How? (images, recordings, text)?
- Have you reviewed the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) recently to remind yourself of the additional protections students must have under federal law?

Many thanks, and apologies for the lengthy email. A shorter and essential list of technology support and online teaching resources will come this afternoon, courtesy of Judy Cahn and the DOES team. Going forward, Judy and I will be sharing these emails, streamlining your inboxes and communications.

Be safe and well.

Gina