Subject: Resources to Keep Teaching: In the Event of Extended Campus Closure
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Dear Colleagues,

In recent news, we’ve read about how various universities have made the decision to close campus for an extended period of time due to the COVID-19 virus (Columbia University, Princeton, University of Washington to name a few). These institutions are moving instruction to the online environment to reduce the chance of spreading the virus and to keep students on schedule and on track toward degree completion. This email shares UMSL’s Keep Teaching resource that includes tips and considerations should UMSL make the decision to close for a period of time.

We are all hopeful that the news of the COVID-19 virus doesn't affect our campus or disrupt the good plans you already have in place for your students. If it does and we close for a period of time, please rest assured that you have the support and resources needed to prepare.

In the unlikely event of an extended campus closure, you will receive a message from Interim Chancellor Sobolik with detailed instructions about what to do. Until that time, we continue as originally planned, though I recommend revisiting your syllabus policies about mandatory attendance and late work. With so much media coverage, some students may be afraid to come to campus or may need to care for family members who are ill. Flexibility will help everyone in these uncertain times.

In the meantime, you may be wondering how to adapt face-to-face and blended instructional activities for online delivery. Our goal is to maintain the delivery of quality instruction as much as possible to minimize the disruption of student progress toward degree completion.

Shifting to a new mode of instruction may be strange and disorienting to both you and your students, therefore my colleagues and I are here to help support you as you consider how to make that shift if it’s needed to keep instruction going until our campus reopens. Our team is putting together some workshops on tools and strategies as we speak – I’ll let you know when those dates/times are set. We plan to offer in-person and virtual sessions to help answer any questions, help you make decisions about what and how to adapt materials and activities, and help you learn to use the tools you have chosen.

It is essential that any changes to how students meet with you, how learning content and activities are shared, and how your expectations of students have changed are clearly communicated to them. Having a plan in place will help you share those messages quickly if/when we need to.

One starting place for thinking through options for online teaching is the CTL’s Keep Teaching guide that provides help for pivoting a portion of your course to online should the need arise. Of course, we know that designing a fully online class takes careful planning and preparation. Moving some elements, though, to online can be done fairly efficiently. Flexibility is key as it may mean that you need to adjust your syllabus, policies, and expectations for
students during an unexpected time like this.

1. **Review your syllabus for adjustments.** What will have to temporarily change in your syllabus (attendance policies, due dates, assignments, etc.)? Since students will also be thrown off by the changes, they will appreciate details whenever you can provide them.

2. **Be realistic.** What do you think you can realistically accomplish during this time period? What activities are better rescheduled, and what can or must be done online? Give yourself a little flexibility in that schedule, just in case the situation takes longer to resolve than you think.

3. **Consider pacing.** Do you think you can maintain your original syllabus and schedule?

4. **Guide students.** Consider ways to guide students through the readings by structuring in discussions or assignments to add accountability and help students process what they’re reading.

5. **Focus on what’s most important.** Identify your priorities during the disruption—providing lectures, structuring new opportunities for discussion or group work, collecting assignments, etc.

6. **Consider adding in a syllabus statement or announcement such as this:** 

   **Sample Syllabus Statement or Announcement**

   In the case of widespread illness, severe weather or other emergency, the campus might be closed. Official closures and delays are announced on the [UMSL website](https://www.umsl.edu) and through [our campus alert system](https://www.umsl.edu/services/umslalerts). In addition, local news and broadcasts may provide additional regional information.

   It is expected that we will keep moving forward as a class to meet our learning objectives even during emergency closings or disruptions. Please refer to my special set of assignments and communication instructions found on the syllabus and on [Canvas](https://www.canvas.umd.edu). I will review these instructions with you in class and throughout the semester, but I invite and encourage questions, comments, or ideas about how to maintain community support and achieve our course goals during any potential campus closures.

7. **Get Help.** Connect with colleagues who teach online or consult with the CTL or Office of eLearning staff to develop your backup plan should the need arise. Your colleagues in the CTL and the Office of eLearning stand ready to help you. Please let us know how we can be helpful as you practice some just-in-time online teaching adaptations.
8. **Remember that not all students have a computer or a webcam at home.** We recommend that you choose to deliver your course asynchronously in Canvas rather than teaching in Zoom only. Many students do not own computers, have internet at home, or have webcams that might be needed in a Zoom call. Students most likely have smartphones or access to a computer/internet but perhaps not at the time of the scheduled Zoom call. Placing materials such as readings and lectures online and activities (discussions and assignments) in Canvas minimizes the stress on students and reduces the chance for something to go amiss with audio/video in a real-time meeting. See the tips and strategies on the Keep Teaching guide to learn more about how to accommodate students who may be unable to log into the Zoom meeting.

It can be challenging to translate what you already do well in a face-to-face classroom into an online module. Here are some models you might want to follow as you’re getting started. Consult with a colleague or an instructional designer in the CTL or the Office of eLearning for help or advice.

**Getting Ready**

- Adapting Seminar Courses to Online
- Adapting Lecture Courses to Online
- Adapting Labs to Online
- Teaching Online in Canvas
- Meeting Online in Zoom
- Communicating with Students

The CTL and Office of eLearning staff are working now to build out a similar guide for students called Keep Learning on the CTL website to help students more easily adapt to any change in their courses due to a campus closure. We are including information about how to use Canvas and other tools, manage their time, and adapt to learning in an online environment. Most importantly, we want you to feel supported in knowing that we’re here to support our students by minimizing their stress and helping them acclimate to any changes in their learning environment. When it is ready, it will be posted on the CTL website, and we will send an email to the student listserv informing them of this resource. You may also wish to link to that resource in an Announcement in the unlikely event of a campus closure.

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In the meantime, our work continues, and as you take a break, here are a few articles to consider reading with your morning or afternoon coffee:

- [Teaching in Times of Crisis](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/ptc/) (Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching)
- [How to Be a Better Online Teacher: Advice Guide](https://chronicle.com/) (Chronicle of Higher Education)
- [Faculty Perceptions of Moving a Face-to-Face Course to Online Instruction](https://www.jctl.org/) (Journal of College Teaching and Learning)

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