

MEMO

To: College of Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty and Staff

From: Dean Jeff Braden

Date: March 16, 2020

Subject: Academic continuity during COVID-19

Dear colleagues,

If you are an instructor of record, please see Associate Dean Deanna Dannels' message to you below.

I want to reiterate what Deanna says below to faculty, and extend her message to both our faculty and staff. I know these times are extremely stressful, and I appreciate so much all that each of you is doing to protect your own health and that of our students and each other; to find creative alternatives to — and in many cases, to let go of — the plans you've carefully laid, and that have been so utterly disrupted; and to maintain your professionalism, your can do spirit, and your calm amid the storm.

Our students look to you not only for what they can learn in the classroom, but also for guidance and modeling the way. Thank you. We'll weather this together.

Because this is such a rapidly evolving situation, we encourage you all to take whatever you may need with you each evening when you leave work so that you are prepared for the possibility of changes in the university's work status.

Best,

Jeff

Dear faculty:

I am writing to follow up on the Provost's memorandum asking faculty to contact students about expectations for academic continuity by Wednesday, March 18th. First and foremost, I know this is a challenging time and one that puts all of us in uncharted waters. I am impressed and grateful to all of you for working incredibly hard to get your courses online during a time of high anxiety and stress. Thank you.

I know this is not easy. I know for many of you, it is hard to achieve your learning objectives and outcomes without the face-to-face setting. Many of you have spent an incredible amount of time conceiving of your courses as face-to-face, interactive classrooms. You've planned activities, developed discussions, imagined small group meetings, created engaging debates; all of which were encoded into your class. And now, you've been asked to move everything online and to do so quickly.

First, no one expects your academic continuity plan to be perfect. But: we should not let the perfect be the enemy of the good; it will not be perfect for many of our courses. Be as creative as possible about how to achieve learning objectives in new ways and be student-centric as you think about changing expectations.

We have made the decision as a college not to grant any exceptions to allow face-to-face instruction, so your students will not need to return to campus for our courses. I know, though, that there are a variety of continuity plans you've put in place and it is still important to communicate your expectations to them. That said, when you contact your students, you might not have everything figured out and that is fine. Share with them what you do know; share with them how you plan to connect virtually and the expectations for their participation in both synchronous and asynchronous settings in your course. Give them a starting point, and be honest about things you are still working on and clear about how you will continue to communicate with them as we move into the next weeks.

If you need support moving your courses online, there are a wealth of resources on the NC State Keep Teaching website (<https://provost.ncsu.edu/faculty-resources/keep-teaching/>). If you do not have the technological equipment you need to move your course online, go to DH Hill or the Hunt Library and they will work with you.

You cannot do what you were planning to do when this semester started, I understand. But there is a lot you can do. You can support your students in building resilience, in practicing flexibility, and in persisting through change. You can show your students what it means to garner resources they did not know they had. You can model kindness and empathy.

I have made the claim (in my writings and in my teaching) that teaching is heart work. It is a fairly straightforward claim, but it is not always easy. During this time, the heartwork of teaching, along with the intellectual work involved with adapting your courses to an online setting, is probably going to be challenging. Never has it been more important, though. You can and will make a difference for our students; and I believe it will be a difference for good.

Thank you, again, for your work and for the role you play in our students' lives.

Sincerely,

Deanna