May 14, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for all of your efforts this past semester as we transitioned to a remote mode of operation. I think we did better than most institutions in adapting to the needs of our students. That success can directly be attributed to the hard work and dedication of our faculty and staff. Thank you.

Although I am hopeful that we have experienced the worst of the crisis, we have to be prepared in case the situation persists or even worsens over the next few months. At this time, we are preparing for a normal fall semester. However, we have to make alternate plans in case we are forced to return to a remote style of teaching. To that end, we must consider the needs of the curriculum, faculty, and students.

The Council of Academic Deans and I have decided to instruct all departments to identify an appropriate form of hybrid instruction for fall classes. There are various models of hybrid instruction. I would ask you to consider which would be best for your discipline. I have included a link below with a description of the various models. Most of these models consider a 50-50 split between face-to-face and remote instruction. This past spring, many of you delivered your classes via remote instruction with little advance notice. There is a chance history may repeat itself in the fall. Your deans will be working with your chairs to assist with this preparation. I ask you to spend time this summer preparing your courses for a hybrid approach should we find it necessary to switch to remote learning.

The President has formed several work groups, consisting of faculty and staff, and tasked them with suggesting recommendations for safely and effectively opening the campus this fall. These groups will make recommendations to the President’s Cabinet. These recommendations should be announced in early June. I hope that you are able to enjoy the next few weeks of relaxation, ready to spend June and July planning for the new challenges we may experience in the fall.

SHSU Online and the PACE Center will continue to provide assistance and guidance on how to engage your students using remote instruction. All faculty, especially those who have not participated in past training opportunities, should complete the appropriate training this summer to be prepared for the fall. I would ask that you communicate with your colleagues to share ideas of what was helpful this spring. We need to identify best practices as to how to engage your students, how to hold office hours, and how to communicate with your students on a regular basis.

It will be vital for all of us to follow best practices that will allow our students to quickly adjust to changing conditions while maintaining course continuity. These best practices include using the University LMS (Blackboard) as the hub for these essential course elements:

- Syllabus
- Course Communication
- Course Schedule and Calendar
- Attendance Monitoring
- Gradebook
- Online Office Hours

Richard Eglsaer, PhD

SHSU Online and the PACE Center will continue to provide assistance and guidance on how to engage your students using remote instruction. All faculty, especially those who have not participated in past training opportunities, should complete the appropriate training this summer to be prepared for the fall. I would ask that you communicate with your colleagues to share ideas of what was helpful this spring. We need to identify best practices as to how to engage your students, how to hold office hours, and how to communicate with your students on a regular basis.

It will be vital for all of us to follow best practices that will allow our students to quickly adjust to changing conditions while maintaining course continuity. These best practices include using the University LMS (Blackboard) as the hub for these essential course elements:

- Syllabus
- Course Communication
- Course Schedule and Calendar
- Attendance Monitoring
- Gradebook
- Online Office Hours
We currently place our syllabi and schedules on Blackboard. Best practices suggest we keep our attendance records and grades on Blackboard to make the information more immediately accessible to students. In addition, at times we have found it difficult to respond to grade appeals or verifications at the end of the semester, due to faculty illness or even leaving the university. In consultation with the Council of Academic Deans, I have decided that Blackboard will serve as the uniform repository for this information. To assist you with this transition, we will be providing training this summer on the use of Blackboard as the course hub for the above listed essential course elements. Along those same lines, we will continue requiring certification for online teaching.

I hope that these precautions are not needed. However, we cannot afford to wait if indeed we do have to revert to remote instruction this fall. Although we have a great track record for responding to short-term emergencies, we have little experience in dealing with such a long-term crisis. I have confidence that with patience and preparation, we will be able to successfully assist our students through this pandemic.

Again, I appreciate your dedication and efforts to date. I hope that you and your loved ones remain safe.

Sincerely,

Dick

Richard Eglsaer, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Forms of Hybrid Instruction

https://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/faculty/Hybrid_Models.pdf

Subcommittees for Preparing for the fall semester

https://www.shsu.edu/today@sam/T@S/article/2020/map-out-fall-semester

Training Programs:

https://online.shsu.edu/campus/faculty-services/faculty-development/online-faculty-development-signup.html#sign-up