

Subject: Message from the Provost

Date: Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at 5:24:23 PM Eastern Daylight Time

From: Nina Mikhalevsky (nmik)

To: Nina Mikhalevsky (nmik)

Dear Colleagues, this afternoon President Paino shared several important messages about the University's response to the coronavirus including that all instruction will be moved to alternate delivery formats in support of remote instruction beginning on Monday, March 16th and continuing for at least three weeks (through Friday, April 3rd). All classes will be cancelled this Thursday, March 12, and Friday, March 13 with the goal of providing you, students, and staff a bit of time to prepare for the coming weeks.

In addition, because we are in the midst of advising season, we will push back advanced registration until the week of April 13th, thereby providing additional time for you to connect with advisees remotely during this time (further details will be provided in a separate communication).

On Sunday, March 8, 2020 I wrote to share that several offices within Academic Affairs have been working to provide support to maintain continuity in our academic operations should such a move be necessary. Today, I write to provide further guidance and resources to support you in making choices about the best way to accomplish these ends.

Our primary goal is to ensure that all students who seek to complete their courses by the conclusion of the spring semester and/or to complete their course of study and receive their degree at the end of the term, have an opportunity to do so. Final grades are due on May 5, 2020 at 10:00 am.

It is important to recognize that we will not be able to accomplish all that we otherwise might have hoped at the beginning of the semester in our in-person classes. Instead, it is critical that we focus on the most essential learning outcomes in our courses and focus on what is critically necessary to accomplish. You should use your best judgment to adjust your courses appropriately.

Consider the following recommendations:

You have discretion and choices. Faculty have discretion to amend and reorganize course syllabi as needed. Courses may be "convened" either synchronously (e.g. teleconference, chats, or discussion boards, instant message) or asynchronously through Canvas or some other means. While synchronous convenings may pose challenges that should be carefully considered in advance (and perhaps in consultation with the Center for Teaching, Digital Learning Support and the University Libraries) the class must continue to follow the established meeting times for the course. Faculty may offer alternative assignments (as in an individual study). This could include readings or other multimedia content, papers, homework assignments, research projects, quizzes, or some other alternative work. If you have questions, please consult with your department chair or associate dean.

Support is available to you and your students. As you have already heard, the Center for Teaching, Digital Learning Support, and the Library have prepared resources, identified tools, and stand ready to assist and consult with you both now and in the coming weeks. In addition, academic support units are making plans to continue operations and provide remote support for students. These include Academic Services, Career Center, Digital Knowledge Center, the

Office of Disability Resources, Speaking Center, University Libraries, and the Writing Center and we expect their webpages to reflect these changes by Monday, March 16th. They will also be reaching out directly to students.

Continue to accommodate students. While resources and tools utilized to support remote instruction are generally accessible and designed to meet the needs of diverse learners, you will need to be flexible and do what they can to support students and create an inclusive and accessible learning environment. All faculty are expected to continue to work with students who have accommodations and be willing to provide alternative equivalent assignments, materials, etc. and/or utilize those which are accessible to meet the critical learning outcomes of the course. The Center for Teaching, Digital Learning Support, University Libraries and the Office of Disability Resources are available and ready to assist as always. In particular, instructors will need to ensure that students who need accommodations in this new modality have those needs met in appropriate ways. It will also be important to have open communication channels since students will need to communicate with you about how these changes may impact them.

Acknowledge the challenges. For many faculty who are teaching labs, studio courses, community engagement or service learning courses, or other types of courses, this shift to remote instruction will be even more challenging. You are encouraged to be open to new possibilities, to continue to consult with colleagues, and to tap your professional networks. We are not alone. Our professional colleagues here and across the country have all arrived at the same imperfect moment full of possibilities for sharing, collaboration, and creativity.

Rely on our strengths. We bring to this challenge many strengths, deeply embedded in our shared notion of what it means to teach and learn at Mary Washington. While the modalities shift, the same value that we each place on quality student-faculty interactions need not change. Our long standing commitment to academic integrity and the Honor Code provide meaning to renewed calls to ask students to “pledge” their work.

Again, I thank you for your commitment to our students and your flexibility and patience at this challenging time. As we seek to carry out the work of our core teaching mission, your dedication and cooperation is appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Nina Mikhalevsky
Provost