Academic Continuity

Academic continuity refers to the continuation of academic instruction at Allegany College of Maryland should face-to-face classroom instruction be interrupted for a period of time. ACM instructors will utilize synchronous (live video), asynchronous (recorded video) and eLearning/online modalities for instruction. Instructors will have to use our learning management system (LMS) *Brightspace* to organize their curriculum and deliver their instruction.

In the event that an emergency occurs, the college may be forced to close for an extended period of time. These events usually occur with little advanced notice. You may need to move your course(s) fully online quickly. Here are some considerations for these actions.

Back up course materials

Each course taught has a corresponding *Brightspace* course shell that you are required to have a syllabus posted, and a gradebook maintained. This shell, or your *OneDrive in Office 365*, can be the repository for your teaching materials should the campus be closed and your office inaccessible. Your materials will be available to you at home through the internet. Use this course shell to upload your lecture files and notes, discussion topics, assignments with instructions, quizzes, and exams. You could also use a flash drive, external hard drive, Box or other cloud drives to back up your course materials.

If you do not have reliable internet connection, please contact ISA so we can help strategize about possible remedies.

Communication

Communicate regularly with your students. Remember they will receive other emergency closure notifications from the college. Students will be confused and anxious. You should email your students immediately to avoid being inundated with individual inquiries. Use the "course announcements" function in Brightspace to send messages to each class at large.

- Create and email the plan for the course over the next 2-4 weeks. Put that plan in your course shell on *Brightspace* near the syllabus.
- Make sure in your email and online message to convey the course will continue via the online environment until notified.
- Set clear expectations for continuing coursework: course reading schedule, assignment deadlines, projects, regularly checking *Brightspace* and their college email, etc.
- Create a discussion board thread for "questions" for each course. This will allow you to centralize and manage student questions in an efficient and effective manner. Sometimes students will answer each other's questions.
- Communicate expectations for your response time for email questions and for grading assignments. Remember quick response to concerns will reduce their anxiety.

- Communicate to students when you will be available to them online. Post virtual office hours.

Remember, according to the United States Department of Education, "instructors must initiate substantive communication with students, either individually or collectively, on a regular basis."

Deliver Course Content

Flexibility will be a key element as you move everything online. Prioritize course content by focusing on delivering the material that is most significantly tied to the learning outcomes for the course. Resources concerning *Brightspace* can be found at:

- Brightspace for Learners – ACM's self-paced online course that teaches students the basics of using Brightspace. Self-registration for this course is available under "My Brightspace" after login to Brightspace with your ACM email address and password at https://allegany.brightspace.com.
- Brightspace for Instructors – ACM's self-paced online courses that teaches faculty the basics of using Brightspace. Self-registration for this course is available under "My Brightspace" after login to Brightspace with your ACM email address and password at https://allegany.brightspace.com.
- YouTube Brightspace tutorials
    - For students: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=brightspace+for+students
    - For faculty: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=brightspace+for+instructors
- Brightspace Community
    - Resources for learners: https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Semester-Start-Learners
    - Resources for instructors: https://community.brightspace.com/s/topic/0TO610000000JctGAE/instructor
    - Changing From Classroom To Online Courses During The COVID-19 Virus Outbreak: https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Changing-from-classroom-to-online-courses-during-the-COVID-19-virus-outbreak

Maintaining synchronous online activities during scheduled normal class times helps to minimize student scheduling conflicts. Technological tools will be available to video conference and *synchronously* teach your course—webcams built into your laptop, available plug-in webcams, using Virtual Classroom in Brightspace, Microsoft Teams, or for meetings 40 minutes or less, the free version of Zoom. Students will be able to hear/see/ask you questions live.

Current versions of Powerpoint allow you to add notes and narration to your presentations. Recorded lectures can then be posted on *Brightspace* and asynchronously viewed by the students at a later time.

Become familiar with these tools and only use those you have a working comfort level with—now is not the time to add stress to the situation. New tools can mean more stress for you and for your students. Remember the focus is on student learning and continuity during this uncertain time.

Please consider that eLETS will be inundated with questions and requests, and will therefore will only be able to help you troubleshoot after you have completed tutorials and used FAQ's, Brightspace Helpdesk, Youtube videos, and other resources to resolve the issue. eLets will have to triage their time, giving precedence to critical requests.

Clinicals and Labs

Most likely in an emergency closure, some clinical sites will be closed to students as well. Arrangements will be made at a later date by the instructor and the program director.

Labs are difficult to replicate online as they require physical interaction with specific equipment. For short-term closures, considerations should be given to:

- Move teaching aspects of a lab to the online environment by requiring students to familiarize themselves with lab procedures or data analysis.
- Find online videos or simulations that demonstrate the lab techniques desired.
- Contact textbook publisher to see if any ancillary instructional materials are available.

These will not replace the lab skills and techniques that will still need to be taught, but will allow the student to be prepared for lab when the college reopens.

Students with Academic Accommodations

We must maintain access to instructional material in the online environment to students with disabilities. Ideally, for short-term closures, exams and quizzes could wait for the college to re-open. This may not be possible. The most common accommodation is extended testing time, *so the time limits for quizzes and exams would need to be extended to time and a half.* Also keep in mind that quizzes and exams taken online will not be proctored, unless you are a program that has already secured a proctoring service.

Please contact Dr. June Bracken for consultation concerning students with disabilities at jbracken@allegany.edu or 301-722-2862.