

Saturday, March 14, 2020 – More Guidance to Keep us Going

Dear Colleagues,

With apologies for any repeat posting, attached is a note from Provost Taber that contains a lot of important information and guidance on remote teaching, advising, and learning. I hope you will all get a chance to read it carefully. I want to highlight a couple of pieces from his note, and share two new resources that I heard about late this afternoon.

First, Provost Taber mentioned that we should be in conversation with our students sometime next week, letting them know whatever adjustments we are making to our syllabi. I know a lot of you have already reached out to your students. This is a formal request to explicitly and clearly send students adjustments to syllabi: “Faculty should prepare and distribute an addendum to course syllabi to students to outline any new expectations. Please communicate with students via email and/or Canvas during the week of March 16 to let them know what to expect when you resume instruction during the week of March 23. This communication could include the syllabus addendum and link to the Student Checklist on the K-State Keep Teaching website.”

Second, Provost Taber’s note reiterates some of the national “best practices” for changing course delivery mid-semester: “Moving courses to remote teaching in the middle of the semester is disruptive and challenging. Faculty are advised to keep it simple. Faculty do not need to redesign courses for ideal online teaching. We often feel that we have to automatically think to the future and have the most cutting-edge technology to deliver remote learning. In fact, we may find inspiration in returning to our roots when a low-tech, yet effective mode of delivery could be satisfactory. The most important principle is to focus on tools and approaches that will best help students achieve the course learning objectives while minimizing risk.”

As I mentioned before, there is a wealth of practical guidance in Provost Taber’s note. I would also like to share that our “Keep Teaching” colleagues added a page for those of us teaching lab and/or practice-based courses remotely: <https://www.k-state.edu/keep-teaching/lab-courses.html> And there are some excellent short videos from fellow faculty in the midst of adjusting their own courses: <https://www.k-state.edu/keep-teaching/tips.html>. These resources remind us that that even in all of the stress, we can (continue to) be excited, creative, and excellent scholars and educators.

There is a lot of information coming out, and a lot of change to keep track of. I won’t write often, but I thought you could use this information earlier than later as your adventures in teaching and advising continue. And I know there is more guidance on our research practices coming soon, so keep an eye out.

In the meantime, be good to yourselves. We need you. And thank you for all you continue to do for K-State.

With best wishes for smooth transitions and good health,

Tanya

Date: March 13, 2020

From: Chuck Taber, Provost and Executive Vice President

To: Academic Administrators, Faculty, and Staff

RE: Moving to Remote Teaching, Learning and Advising

The decision to move to remote teaching [announced by President Myers](#) is grounded in a need to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus and protect our campuses and local communities. In this state of transition, our priority is compassion and care for the members of our community who may be directly or indirectly impacted by the pandemic. We must also work collaboratively to find new ways to fulfill our academic mission and ensure continued student learning and progression.

The purpose of this letter is to provide guidance for moving to remote teaching, learning and advising in response to the current COVID 19 situation. In-person classes are suspended for the week of March 16-20. Courses previously meeting online will be held as scheduled. Beginning March 23, classes will be taught remotely (that is, using teaching and learning methods that are not based on in-person meetings) until further notice. The University will give at least one week's notice before in-person classes will resume.

While many details are still being determined, the following list provides information and support as we move forward.

1. Our greatest asset is our people. We will have students, faculty, and staff directly who may become ill, have preexisting health considerations, and/or need to care for family members who may be impacted.
 - a. If a student needs to miss class because of illness, please accommodate them. We are suspending any course policies requiring a doctor's note.
 - b. Faculty and staff are encouraged to telework if possible. Special consideration should be given to those in higher risk categories. HCS has provided [guidance and FAQs](#) for relaxed policies for unit heads to determine who may be eligible to work remotely.
2. Faculty should prepare and distribute an addendum to course syllabi to students to outline any new expectations. Please communicate with students via email and/or Canvas during the week of March 16 to let them know what to expect when you resume instruction during the week of March 23. This communication could include the syllabus addendum and link to the Student Checklist on the [K-State Keep Teaching](#) website.
3. Faculty moving courses from in-person to remote teaching should not require student participation or have assignments due during the week of March 16.
4. If a course is being moved to remote teaching and students were expecting to turn in assignments or take exams the week of March 16, please move the exams or submission of assignments to the following week.

Note from the Provost

5. We have been using the term “academic continuity” defined as continuing to make instructional and academic progress despite disruptions to in-person learning experiences. Academic continuity is the responsibility of all instructors of record, including full-time faculty, adjuncts, and graduate teaching assistants.
6. Moving courses to remote teaching in the middle of the semester is disruptive and challenging. Faculty are advised to keep it simple. Faculty do not need to redesign courses for ideal online teaching. We often feel that we have to automatically think to the future and have the most cutting-edge technology to deliver remote learning. In fact, we may find inspiration in returning to our roots when a low-tech, yet effective mode of delivery could be satisfactory. The most important principle is to focus on tools and approaches that will best help students achieve the course learning objectives while minimizing risk.
7. You may find that a combination of interactive asynchronous tools (use of discussion boards, email, or other tools that can be used to let students complete their work on their own time) and synchronous tools (live real-time class sessions, via Zoom, on set schedules) will help you to meet your instructional goals. A few notes:
 - a. We recommend choosing asynchronous tools and using pre-recorded video content when possible, which will help to distribute the load on technical systems.
 - b. If you choose synchronous tools, please do so during the time your course would have met in-person. Offering a live meeting time outside of your scheduled in-person class time will create conflicts for students who are potentially balancing other course meeting times and responsibilities.
 - c. If you offer a live session, you should record it to be watched by students at a later time with no penalty for missing the live session. This will help students who have limited internet access to be able to engage with course content on their own time.
8. We have a range of resources available on the [K-State Keep Teaching website](#), including K-State colleagues and a global community of educators who are sharing resources on [Keep Teaching: Resources for Higher Ed](#).
9. Virtual sessions offering practical advice and solutions are scheduled to begin next week. You can find the schedule [here](#).
10. There will also be trainings available to supervisors and department heads next week. Please contact Brian Niehoff at niehoff@k-state.edu for more information.
11. We need to document our efforts as we shift to remote or online instruction. Brian Niehoff will be distributing spreadsheets of the course schedules in each college and school for this purpose to deans and department heads.
12. Academic advisors will also need to support students remotely. [Resources and support](#) for remote advising are available. Enrollment for Summer and Fall 2020 terms begins on March 23.
13. Students are going to need us. Please respond to student inquiries in a timely manner and consider hosting virtual office hours.
14. Our research enterprise is a major consideration. Please review the [guidance](#) provided by the Office of Research Development.

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, we are closely monitoring the developments. The best place to stay informed is the [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) website](#).

Note from the Provost

As a community, we are working as quickly as possible to respond to this challenge. I am confident that we can. Thank you for continuing to put our students first.