

3/5/2020

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

I know the past few weeks have been unsettling with the onset of the Coronavirus and the impact that concern has had on communities in China and throughout the world. Our thoughts and prayers are with those individuals and families as they navigate this unusual situation. Please know that if that threat intensifies and comes close to our various communities, we will work together through that crisis in a sensitive and responsible way. In doing so, we will leverage our extraordinary faculty and our very capable administrators to weather any unfortunate crisis.

In reference to teaching our students, the University has identified several strategies to support students who may be limited in their ability to travel or students who may need to learn from a distant location. We will be investigating alternative ways to teach, alternate ways to engage students, and different ways to reach our traditional learning outcomes.

As most of you know, we are well positioned to teach students at a distance. Our online program is effectively designed and can provide a learning platform for all students. We maintain one of the largest online programs in U.S. small colleges and have a strong and well-deserved reputation for teaching both traditional and adult students. In addition, we have taught students through audio conferencing and correspondence. Ottawa's ability to pioneer and navigate hardship is part of our DNA and comes to us naturally, from even as far back as the Meeker family who suffered extraordinary hardship in ministering to the Ottawa Tribe and its people, and they did so despite the odds and regardless of the personal cost. If our communities face a prolonged concern over the coronavirus, we will pull from that "Ottawa Spirit."

Below, please join me in reviewing some strategies that could facilitate our instruction and provide an avenue for our students and faculty to engage academically, even if we are asked to do so in unique ways and from a distance. THIS LIST IS NOT INTENDED TO BE COMPLETE. These strategies have been recommended by both full-time and adjunct faculty, as well as teaching administrators over the past several weeks, endeavoring to set the stage for achieving appropriate and effective learning. Some of these ideas may never be considered beyond this list; however, my desire is to share these concepts and invite our teaching community to advise each other on potential solutions and new distance learning best practices.

As you read through the selected list of strategies below and share your ideas, I will endeavor to post those ideas on our academic portal. I would ask that if students inquire about how Ottawa might function in case we are faced with a Pandemic, let them know we will be there even if our traditional classrooms are transitioned and taught in unique or unusual ways - we will continue to provide our programs. Our students will be well-served and our academic community will do so with the pride of our tradition and mission.

Please take some time to review the list below, add to it, and feel free to share insights on how we might carry these interventions forward. Think through how you might employ some of these concepts and how students might be best served in your discipline with limited or constrained resources. In short order we will narrow and clarify the final selected strategies to guide any University-wide intervention if needed. I look forward to your direct feedback and partnership in continuing our work together to serve our students.

I appreciate all that you have already done for our community of learners and your support in meeting any challenges in the future.

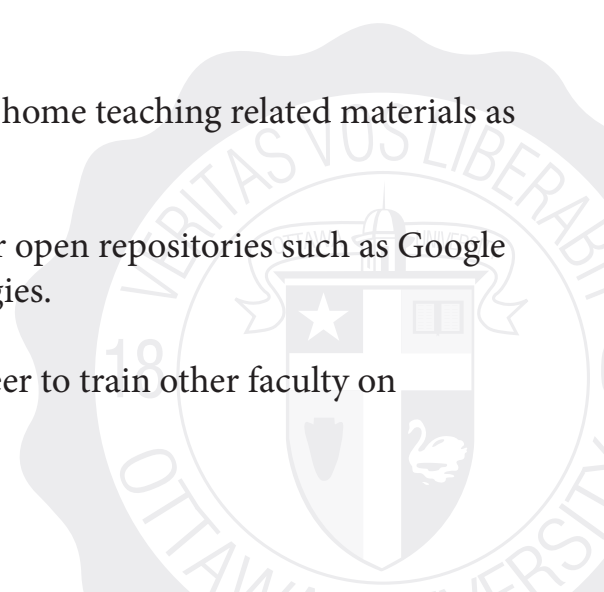


Dr. Terry Haines, University Provost

If Ottawa University identifies an inevitable Pandemic, in which Ottawa must modify the way it teaches courses, the following solutions may be considered. New and creative ideas are welcome, but at the appropriate time the University, in cooperation with the University faculty, may employ some or all of the following strategies to teach our students:

Academic-Related Instruction Considerations (Not intended to be a complete solution and issues not in priority order):

1. Faculty will need advanced notification concerning strategies and instructions as soon as possible to foster planning and practice.
2. If an emergency is identified, faculty will be encouraged to take home teaching related materials as needed.
3. Some Faculty might find the utilization of Blackboard and other open repositories such as Google drive, Dropbox, or other cloud resources helpful for course strategies.
4. Faculty will be asked if they feel prepared and willing to volunteer to train other faculty on utilization of Blackboard or related Internet resources.



5. The University will prepare “teaching rooms” that are designed to record lectures for distribution and archive.
6. If necessary, faculty and general personnel will be provided protocol for campus access and student engagement as needed.
7. Exams may need to be transitioned to more convenient or distance-learning structure, including live proctoring during exams through Zoom.
8. In case of an emergency, Faculty should anticipate developing limited lesson plans for at least 2-3 weeks in preparation for the unanticipated need to assign substitute teachers.
9. In reference to term transition, the University would need to communicate to faculty new policies or procedures for upcoming terms and do so in a timely fashion.
10. The University should endeavor to schedule additional workshops on Blackboard course development for general faculty training.
11. Online courses should continue as scheduled.
 - a. If necessary, curriculum designers within OU’s online program could make arrangements to work from home.
12. Faculty should be asked immediately how they would prefer their ground courses transitioned to the following (shown in order of most efficient option):
 - a. Audio (Classes meet as scheduled but meet over the telephone via audio conference call. Document transactions and assignment submissions can be handled through e-mail)
 - b. Zoom (Classes meet as scheduled but meet through video ZOOM via video conference call. Document transactions and assignment submissions can be handled through e-mail. **CAUTION:** Zoom is notorious for audio problems and connectivity issues.)
 - c. Online courses require some level of content “loading,” as well as training for both faculty and students. The minimum management of content includes syllabi, announcements, discussion questions, handouts, assignment reception methodology, and general resources.
 - d. Teaching through Correspondence: Correspondence should be used as a last resort, unless used for transport of documents or assignments. Logistics for US Mail are quite significant and not timely.
13. Lectures: Faculty can continue to provide lectures through Zoom at regularly scheduled times. Recordings can be made to serve as a continuing resource for students. Student questions can be

received live or submitted via e-mail for next-session-resolution.

14. Laboratory courses: Faculty may need to prepare an alternative strategy for applied LAB activities or create an effective replacement exercise that is fully narrative, adapted to independent activity, written-response-oriented, and results can be submitted via e-mail.

15. Attendance: Attendance can be effectively managed through Blackboard for online courses, but for audio, zoom, and correspondence courses, the instruction will require attendance be determined through monitoring electronic transactions.

16. Experienced faculty who choose to teach ground courses online, will need to have Blackboard shells constructed through the design studio Associate Dean.

17. If necessary, arrangements could be made for faculty to work from home.

18. Students could be provided with all contact information for peers in the classroom and faculty.

19. Students could be asked to limit communication with faculty to during scheduled class periods or during requested appointments.

20. Faculty could be asked to notify their students when they will be available outside of class to answer questions (office hours) or provide course-related assistance.

21. If there is an unusual demand for faculty appointments, faculty could be encouraged to schedule open Zoom or audio review sessions in order to provide additional contact and instruction time with students.

Academic-Related General Considerations (Not intended to be a complete solution and issues not in priority order):

1. All advising can be accomplished through the telephone and e-mail.
2. Course registration can be handled through the Internet.
3. Library access and resources can be handled through the University's portal.
4. The University will need to investigate IT load capacity, including increased demand for audio conference calls, zoom sessions, Blackboard shell development, and general data.

Again, if Ottawa University identifies an inevitable Pandemic, in which Ottawa must modify the way it teaches courses, the above solutions may be considered. New and creative ideas are welcome, but at the appropriate time the University, in cooperation with the University faculty, may employ some or all of the above strategies to teach our students.

