

CTE Campus-Wide Message
May 21, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Last week, I said I would provide additional detail and clarification regarding steps we all can take now to begin planning for Fall 2020. This email comes, minimally preambled, mainly to elaborate on possible approaches. A much more detailed version, in the form of a preliminary planning guide, is attached to this email.

Where to Begin?

As you know, students have been invited to return to campus in August to attend their first week of classes on August 24th (except Law) in a remote format before switching to a blended format in Week Two and following, hopefully for the remainder of the semester. But between now and the end of August, a number of factors affecting that blended experience will be in play, including (but by no means limited to) the physical distancing capacity of classrooms, the availability of alternative “classroom” spaces, and the number of students who must enroll in entirely distance versions of their classes. To complicate matters, different programs—particularly those with specific technical needs (fine and performing arts, lab sciences, occupational therapy, etc.) and those with large lecture components—will be affected differently by these factors from others.

As a consequence of this uncertainty, it may be early August—if not later—before we know (1) what proportion of students enrolled in any of our classes will be here in person, (2) which classrooms we’re assigned, (3) for how many of our scheduled class times we’ll have access to our classrooms, and (this is the main point here), (4) how feasible our normal in-person approaches to teaching and learning will be.

So, it would be natural to ask: *If none of these questions is likely to have firm answers for a couple more months or so, how can we possibly begin planning classes now?*

I hope what I have to offer provides some purchase on firm ground as you begin to plan for fall even as the learning landscape continues to shift.

Here’s the biggest takeaway from today’s message: Begin planning the fully-distance, full-semester version of your courses now.

While we don’t know what shape the in-person components of our courses might take, we can begin to plan for what would need to happen if, at some point, we need to shift into a fully distance mode for all of our classes. And by “at some point,” I mean “at a moment’s notice.”

A Four-Phase Approach

There are four broad phases to this planning: 1. Goals and Outcomes; 2. Pedagogy; 3. Modular and Agile Course Design; and 4. Teaching and Learning Technology.

- **Goals and Outcomes Come First:** Begin with program-level and course-level goals and outcomes: What course goals can be most fully achieved in a distance mode? Which will prove more challenging? Which ones are essential given what the course promises and what it provides students as they proceed through their program of study? How might you need to rephrase or reprioritize your outcomes depending on mode?
- **Pedagogy Follows Goals and Outcomes:** Consider what virtual pedagogies will serve those ends. For instance...
 - Synchronous (a.k.a. *real-time*) engagement with your students, whether as a whole class or in small groups is more mentally taxing in a virtual environment than in person. At the same time, it can be immensely powerful. So, think of synchronous engagement as *precious* in a virtual environment and use synchronous encounters purposefully to accomplish what synchronous learning does best.
 - Use asynchronous (a.k.a., whatever the opposite of *real-time* is) engagement with course materials to accomplish goals that *don't require real-time interaction*.
- **Course Design: Modularity and Agility.** The greater the degree to which we're able to "chunk" or modularize students' progress through our virtual courses, the lower the impact of disruptions—foreseen and unforeseen alike—and the greater the likelihood that students will remain engaged throughout the semester. Doing so will also *vastly increase the ease of planning for alternative delivery formats*, such as in-person and blended modes.
- **Engage Teaching and Learning Technology:** It's easy to get paralyzed by the thought of learning and practicing unfamiliar technologies: The complete array of applications available in Blackboard's "Tools" menu is dizzying to those of us most familiar with face-to-face learning, and many of us feel a quite natural anxiety about becoming proficient enough in using them to conduct effective classes. In the words of the immortal—but, sadly, also dead—Douglas Adams, ***Don't Panic***.

And please don't start by looking up a list of all available features and asking yourself, "How can I use this tool in my teaching?" Instead, decide what you want to accomplish in your classes and with your pedagogy, and then ask, "What applications are necessary to accomplish my goals?"

If, however, you're dying to play in the virtual sand, here are some resources to get you started:

- The CTE webpages now feature a suite of introductions to Drake-licensed teaching and learning technologies [here](#).

- Sign up for a free month of online Blackboard tutorials through Lynda [here](#).
- The CTE and DOCE co-curate a list of Blackboard-specific resources [here](#). (I'm aware that there are some access issues with some of the links, but they'll be resolved shortly).
- Categorized resources for remote teaching and learning are updated frequently [here](#).

Who Can I Talk To?

Drake Online and Continuing Education will be hosting brief Drake Online Design Dialogues, bi-weekly sessions on developing online courses in Blackboard. The sessions are open to all and will begin June 4 at 11:30 a.m. and continue every other Thursday at the same time. The sessions will be held in Blackboard Collaborate and hosted by Christina Trombley and Shannon Hilscher.

Sessions will center around a single topic but will also allow for dialogue and questions. Sessions will also include faculty experienced in teaching online at Drake. Space is limited, so register early at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/drake-online-design-dialogue-tickets-106261414752>.

Tentative session topics are as follows:

- June 4 – Organizing your course
- June 18 – Discussion groups
- July 2 – Rubrics
- July 16 – Small Groups
- July 30 – Grade Center
- August 13 – Using Videos

The CTE, Community Engaged Learning, Drake International, and the Office of Campus Equity and Inclusion will offer opportunities to learn more and ask questions about integrating particular approaches to teaching and learning in diverse, engaged, and global contexts during June. Please expect a detailed schedule of sessions with links to register for them next week.

In June and July, the CTE will host a series of open discussions, conversations, and Q&A sessions on whatever teaching and learning matters those who attend find to be of immediate importance.

Finally, next week, faculty should expect to receive an invitation to take part in a faculty-development needs-assessment survey tied to the four-phase planning model outlined above. Your participation in that survey will guide our ongoing planning and support efforts over the summer.

This Final Note

As we get results from the faculty needs survey, complete our analysis of the student survey, and get more information about the variables that will affect the fall semester, I'll continue to send updates and guidance roughly weekly.

For instance, Sue's email yesterday promised guidance from the CTE on planning for blended learning, a promise the CTE and its partners will fulfill. Additionally, and in the meantime, we are exploring some redesign and reorganization of some online resources to make them more navigable and intuitive—another of the things I'll keep you informed of.

I know from queries I've already received that many of us across campus are diving into the serious and, let's face it, difficult work of rethinking our approach to teaching and learning to make our courses, programs, and the Drake experience more resilient to the kind of disruption we continue to experience. I am confident in our ability to succeed, and more thankful than ever in the resilience, energy, and dedication my colleagues demonstrate every day.

Yours in hope and hard work,

Craig