

From: [facstaff](#) on behalf of [Center for Teaching Excellence](#)
To: facstaff@lists.drake.edu
Subject: CTE Updates and Reminders: Spring-Break Edition
Date: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:01:59 PM

Dear Colleagues:

Well, there's nothing like a spring-break snowstorm to get the semester started—and I hope there never will be anything like it again. If you're looking for a way to procrastinate digging out from under our latest weather assault, I invite you to spend a few minutes with this update.

It touches on:

- Virtual Teaching and Learning for the first two weeks of class
- New Faculty Mentors Needed
- LMS Upgrade to Blackboard Learn Ultra Continues
- Supporting our Students this Spring
- Title IX Reporting and Confidentiality
- Class Notes: Creating Community in Virtual Classes (insights from Prof. Jennifer Harvey)

As always, thanks for the hard work you do in maintaining a “distinctive learning environment” for all our students. If you have questions or need assistance with any aspect of teaching and learning at Drake, please don't hesitate to reach out. Likewise, if there is a teaching-and-learning-related topic you would like to see addressed in-depth during a virtual discussion or presentation, please feel free to let me know.

All best,

Craig

Craig Owens
Director
Center for Teaching Excellence

Virtual Teaching and Learning This Spring

As a reminder, the first two weeks of class meetings will be virtual (except in the Law school, which has its own schedule in place). While most students may have some sense of what to expect, we have over fifty new students starting their Drake education this semester.

Given the longer-than-usual time away from class and the number of new-to-Drake students,

please plan to:

- Focus some energy on creating a sense of community and belonging with your students (see also “Class Notes” at the end of this email). The extra class-time doing so takes will be more than repaid by higher student engagement and performance.
- Guide students step-by-step in navigating the online course environment.
- Share with students your plans for communicating with them, including establishing a regular timetable and standard channel for communicating.
- Make time for students to ask questions, and making them feel valued for asking them—even when they are questions we’d ordinarily expect students to know the answers to.
- Ensure that students understand how the transition back to blended or in-person learning will happen in your class in week three, if applicable.

Student input, particularly on their over-all FYS experiences, has highlighted these points as particularly useful steps instructors can take in orienting students to the learning environment of each course.

New Faculty Mentors Needed

The CTE, in partnership with the office of the Associate Provost for Faculty Success, is seeking ten tenured faculty members to serve as mentors for new faculty appointed this year. Mentors serve as informal resources outside their mentees’ home departments, advising on navigating Drake culture, work/life dynamics, and university resources and opportunities. They serve in a purely non-evaluative capacity. The Spring 2021 stipend for mentors is \$500.

Those who have served as mentors in past years are more than welcome to join the mentorship corps again this year.

If you’d like to mentor a newly-appointed faculty member, please send a brief email to Sandra Harris at sandra.harris@drake.edu, stating your interest by Friday, February 5th. At that point, either Sandra or I will be in touch to arrange a brief introductory meeting when new faculty and more seasoned faculty can get to know one another. Pairings will be made based on new faculty members’ sense of who they’d work best with.

LMS Upgrade to Blackboard Learn Ultra Continues

The upgrade to Blackboard Learn Ultra course view continues apace. Here are some highlights, in green, from the most recent (January 21st) update from Dr. Karly Good, our Blackboard administrator:

Prepare for Next Semester

Copy Courses for Efficiency: [Instructions for copying courses](#).

Request Course Merges: [Service requests for merged Blackboard courses](#). I am happy to copy your content forward while completing the merge. Make sure you include the course that currently contains the content as a part of the request.

Course Sharing: Share your courses with colleagues teaching the same Course by submitting a request for [Blackboard Course Sharing](#).

Blackboard Learn Ultra Course View

Blackboard Learn Course View Changes Coming Fall 2021: Drake University is currently using Original Course View through Summer of 2021. Starting Fall 2021, we will be using the Ultra Course View. There is training available to help faculty prepare for the transition. The orientation is on Blackboard and is self-paced (See Blackboard Learn Ultra Training Continues below for more information).

Blackboard Learn Ultra Training Continues

- Blackboard Learn Ultra Instructor Orientation is found under your Assorted Dates section in your Current Courses. You are automatically enrolled in this training course. If you do not have access, please submit an ITS Support Request for [Blackboard User Addition or Removal](#) and list the title "Blackboard Learn Ultra Instructor Orientation" as the CRN (there is no need to complete the spreadsheet for this single user to a single course request).
- Module1-4 are still available. Please complete these four modules before March when further modules will be released.
- Ultra Course View sandboxes are available to you in your Courses list in the Assorted Dates area or under the Sandboxes group of courses. These sandboxes will provide a space for you to experiment with new features in the Ultra Course View while completing modules in the Orientation course. As you create content in sandbox courses, you will be able to copy from sandboxes to fall courses if you are working ahead. If you do not have Ultra Course View sandboxes or need additional sandboxes, please submit a [Blackboard Site Creation](#) request.
- Fall 2021 courses will become available to instructors in March 2021 to begin course design. This gives us plenty of time for training and designing quality, student-centered courses.

If this all seems like news to you, occasional updates on teaching with technology, including tips and tricks from Dr. Good about using Blackboard effectively, may be landing in your Junk Folder instead of your inbox. They also appear on the Blackboard "Institution" page.

Supporting Our Students this Spring

A few updates and reminders about ways we can continue to be supportive of students who for any number of reasons might face disruptions and challenges to their learning this semester.

Covid-19-Related Support

The system for communicating with instructors and advisors about students in isolation and quarantine, which was instituted and refined over the past semester, will remain in place for the Spring. The Dean of Students' office will remain the primary point of communication about Covid-19 related health concerns for students and their impact on attendance in in-person courses.

As in the fall, we all need to be ready at a very short notice to provide alternatives to in-person instruction to students who are placed in isolation or quarantine. So, even if you currently have classes in which 100% of students are enrolled for in-person learning, please expect to have to provide virtual or asynchronous alternatives to some students from time to time and plan for that likelihood.

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Student Disability Services

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As usual, SDS will work with students who need additional support to fully access learning opportunities, whether in a virtual or in-person environment. The communication process is fully electronic, so please keep your eyes out for accommodation and support requests via email. Please also be aware that providing all our students equal access to learning is not just federally mandated, but also at the core of Drake's commitments to its community of learners.

Other Academic Supportive Measures

Student Disability is only one of several reasons a student may require alternative academic supportive measures, such as flexibility with attendance, additional time to complete assigned work, and the like. These reasons include:

- Extended illness
- Family emergencies
- Title-IX related concerns

If a student requires support for these kinds of concerns, communications will come from the dean's office in the college or school of the student's primary major. Deans offices will serve as the primary point of contact for other offices in the university to coordinate responses to a particular student's situation.

Please do not expect to be informed of all the details underlying a request for a supportive

measure or alternative, since a number of federal laws, including Title IX and HIPAA, limit who has access to certain kinds of student information.

Please also be aware that federal law requires the institution, including faculty, to take certain actions or make certain allowances for students in some circumstances.

If you receive notification that a student requires academic supportive measures or alternatives to planned learning activities and have questions about it, please contact Melissa Sturm-Smith, associate provost for student success, at melissa.sturm-smith@drake.edu.

In General

Please remember, throughout the semester, that—like us—our students feel overwhelmed and isolated, even when they're on campus. Maintaining high expectations for student learning and student performance will mean providing flexibility and showing understanding in other areas, such as in the amount of work we ask them to do, the timeframes within which we expect them to complete the work, and their ability to track due dates, meeting modalities, and other nuts-and-bolts exigencies of their courses.

Title IX Reporting and Student Confidentiality

If you, as a mandated reporter, find yourself working with Jessica Morgan-Tate, Drake's Title-IX director, regarding a student in your class, please be careful to communicate about that student's situation *only* with Jessica. Specifically, please ...

- Do not copy others on, or forward emails between you and the Title-IX office.
- Do not copy Jessica on communications about students you send to others.
- Do not use Starfish to report Title-IX related issues.
- Do not disclose to anyone that you are working with Jessica in support of a particular student or students.

Instead, Jessica herself will work directly with student's deans' offices, Student Success, and the Dean of Students' office, and others to ensure that the appropriate individuals are informed of the student's situation.

If you are unsure whether something you have learned or heard requires a report to Title-IX, please ask Jessica directly to advise on appropriate next steps.

Class Notes: Fostering Community in Virtual Classes

Jennifer Harvey, professor of religion, has generously shared the following activity, which she instituted in a class last semester as a way of learning more about students, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose, and engaging them with class material all at the same time. As she explains...

At the beginning of the semester, I asked my students to record and upload a brief (3-4 minute) video self-introduction. Because I didn't want them to provide just a rote "this is my Drake identity" introduction, I provided an open-ended question that I drew from the arc of our course topic. They all ended up with a bit of a course content embedded in their introductions.

Then, I asked students to watch three videos I selected before each class and to come to class with at least one question or response that demonstrated "appreciative curiosity" for each of their peers. At the beginning of class, we would talk for 15 to 20 minutes, to just let them engage each other. I tried to mostly stay out of it other than listening (though I usually had a question or two in my back pocket in case someone who had shared a video didn't get asked anything). We managed to get through all the videos by about halfway through the semester.

I gave them a few points for doing it and made it a pass/fail so that even the most reticent student could find their way into doing it. They got all the points if they just did it, so it "counted."

I also participated in this activity and made my own video even before I asked them to make theirs. That allowed me to model what I was hoping they would do, as well as share a bit about myself, too, in way that went beyond my own "standard" Drake identity.

I'll keep using this activity, since it really changed the whole vibe of their connections with one another and was one of few places where I could count on not having to be the conduit for every interaction. They just connected with each other, which was helpful to their overall online engagement.

If something new you've tried recently has proved effective for your students, especially in the context of the ongoing disruptions to life and learning, please share a brief account of what you did and how it worked to teaching.excellence@drake.edu. As good ideas come in, I'll include them in future CTE email updates.

All best,

Craig

