August 28, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for all the time and creativity you have put into the design and development of your fall 2020 courses. I can't wait to see the fruits of your labor and what your efforts will make possible for our students this fall.

As we begin the fall 2020 return to campus - still in the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic - I write to suggest some additional steps to consider in your teaching and to let you know of some changes in our instructional policies.

First, with respect to instruction, I ask that you be flexible and empathetic with your students and have contingency plans in case of situational change - either for your students or the campus. Anticipating and managing disruptions and delays with a positive, friendly attitude will help your students cope more than almost anything else you can do. Students may become ill, experience limits to or lapses in access to technology or need to respond to unexpected time demands unrelated to academics. Please do your best to be understanding and helpful. In preparation for these and other possible issues related to the pandemic, I encourage you to consider suggestions on the Keep Teaching website such as giving multiple low-stakes assignments, making course expectations very clear, and helping students manage their coursework time by creating a weekly schedule of activities with deadlines. Be as accessible as you can to your class, and use ELMS for distribution of materials, communication with students, and transparency in grading.

Second, as in March 2020, we have temporarily amended some of our policies in 1.00(A) University of Maryland Policy on the Conduct of Undergraduate Courses and Student Grievance Procedure to accommodate our unusual circumstances and to assist you in some of the suggestions mentioned above.

Policy on Excused Absences:

- Anticipating the potential for unanticipated absences during the pandemic, Self-certified notes will serve as documentation for COVID-19-related absences or missed course expectations.
- In providing academic accommodations for students, faculty should consider alternative assignments and make-up work. These course policies should be noted clearly in the syllabus.
- Please work creatively and compassionately with students who have experienced extended excused absences to find ways to allow course completion. If that is not feasible, please direct the student to consult with an academic advisor to explore administrative options, including withdrawing from the course.
Arbitrary and Capricious Grading Policy:

- Since the Excused Absence Policy for Fall 2020 will allow faculty to suggest alternative ways for students with COVID-related absences to make up missed work, such an approach to excused absences will not be subject to the Arbitrary and Capricious Grading Policy as long as this change in policy is communicated to students in the syllabus.

Final Exam Requirement:

- The expectation that every undergraduate course will have a final exam is waived for Fall 2020 as it was for Spring 2020. Faculty are encouraged to use graded "lower stakes" assessments throughout the course, in order that students can build their course grade cumulatively over the course of the semester.

Chairs and directors should also develop contingency plans and be prepared for possible disruptions in instruction. Each course should have a designated backup instructor who has knowledge of the course curriculum and access to the course ELMS site.

Guidance on face coverings in classrooms and other safety precautions:

For instructors who plan to teach in person, new expectations will be in place to protect the safety of students, faculty, staff.

- COVID-19 testing is required for all students, faculty, and staff returning to campus, with repeated testing opportunities planned at weekly intervals throughout the semester
- All students and employees are required to report absence of COVID-19 symptoms daily
- Masking is required of everyone on campus at all times except in private offices
- 6-ft distancing is required of everyone, with floor and seating indicators in public spaces
- One-way traffic and limited entrance and exit doors have been established in heavily used buildings
- There will be twice a day cleaning and disinfecting of restrooms and high touch surfaces in all occupied buildings
- Anti-viral wipes or cleanser stations have been added near all external doors and elevators
- Air handling systems have been checked and upgraded where necessary to insure adequate air movement in offices, classrooms and other areas.
- Plexiglass barriers have been installed where significant people traffic is likely, including some classrooms

Thus, everyone should be prepared to:

- Wear face masks or other approved personal protective equipment while in class
- Maintain social distancing from other individuals
- Use cleaning materials in the classroom to wipe down work areas, desks and seats before class
• Practice good personal hygiene by washing hands frequently with soap and water in addition to using hand sanitizer
• Follow additional guidance communicated by University faculty or staff or public postings and signage

The University has mounted a rigorous communication campaign to remind students of these requirements and their responsibilities to the health and safety of our campus community. It is important that instructors reinforce this effort by reminding students of these requirements and refusing to tolerate noncompliance.

To encourage adherence to the new behavioral requirements:

• Please include a statement of the University's requirements, including masking and social distancing, in your class syllabus1. Further, please orally review classroom requirements at the start of class to provide a general reminder for the entire class.
• If one or more student(s) is(are) not adhering to guidelines, remind them that they are expected to wear a mask, maintain social distance, and/or adhere to additional other posted or communicated requirements. A reminder may be enough encouragement to elicit compliance. The student may have simply forgotten to wear a mask or keep 6 feet away from a friend. We expect to have student ambassadors staffing our classroom buildings and stopping any students without masks before they enter the building or classroom. The ambassadors will have disposable masks to offer students as they stop them at building entrances. You will have a similar supply of masks in your classroom and can make the same offer.
• If, however, the student refuses to put on the offered mask or otherwise comply with classroom regulations the next steps should be:
  o If you can and you are comfortable doing so, initiate a private conversation with the student (e.g., in the hallway, or outside the building) to determine whether there is an underlying cause for the noncompliance. (Do not inquire about a potential medical condition.)
  o If a private conversation is not practical, calmly and firmly address the situation in the classroom.
  o Note the student's name and ID number, remind him/her that not following these requirements is potentially harmful to their classmates and to you, is viewed as disruptive behavior2, and failure to comply3 will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct (studentconduct.umd.edu).

1 Sample syllabus statement: "All students are required to wear a face mask that covers the mouth and nose when in the classroom and in University buildings. Students must also maintain appropriate social distancing from their classmates and adhere to additional health and safety expectations communicated by me or posted in the classroom. Students who cannot wear a mask and have received specific accommodation to that effect from Student Disability Resources should see their advisor for assistance creating an entirely online course schedule."
2 Disruptive behavior is defined as "Engaging in disorderly or disruptive action that interferes with University or community activities, including but not limited to studying, teaching, research, and University administration. Code, Part (d) 4.
3 UMD's Code of Student Conduct defines failure to comply as "Failure to comply with a directive of University
• Ask the student to either abide by the classroom requirements or leave the classroom.

• If the student refuses to leave, inform the student that failure to leave will require you to cancel the class for everyone.

• If the student still refuses to leave, end the class, ask all students to leave the building quietly and quickly, and remove themselves from the situation.

• Exit the area yourself and then document the behavior and class dismissal with your department chair and the Office of Student Conduct.

• As with any situation on campus, UMPD should be contacted if behavior becomes a threat to physical safety.

You might consult these sites for more information and resources.

• Information for Faculty: Keep Teaching, FAQ: Fall 2020 Instruction
• Information for Students: Keep Learning, Course Related Policies
• Fall 2020 Reopening plan - Information for all: umd.edu/4Maryland
• For help with academic technologies, visit the IT Service Desk.

Thank you again for all your hard work in preparing for the return to instruction this fall.

Sincerely yours,

Mary Ann Rankin
Senior Vice President and Provost