July 7, 2020

Dear University of Maryland Faculty,

I write to provide some additional general information about Fall 2020 classes. I expect a fully updated course schedule to be available on Testudo July 15. Thank you all for your contributions to this effort! It has been a challenging and evolving work. A special thanks to staff in the Provost's office, the Registrar’s office, undergraduate studies, and the colleges and departments across campus for all the work you’ve contributed to this effort.

I am sending the attached message to students today and want to make sure that you all have the same information:

• Summer Session II classes will be delivered entirely online, except for a few pilot courses using blended or in-person instruction.
• Fall semester classes will begin on August 31, 2020 as scheduled. The semester will run its full length with classes ending on December 14, 2020. The final exam period will be as scheduled from December 16 to 22. Thanksgiving break will be held as scheduled. We do not expect to change the time between classes or the standard daily start and stop times for classes.
• We hope to finish the semester without further disruption. However, anticipating a possible resurgence of the pandemic in the late fall, I request that instructors who are teaching in-person prepare contingency plans to move classes entirely online after Thanksgiving break or sooner, should that be necessary for public health reasons. If that happens, fall semester final exams for in-person courses will be conducted remotely and students will not be expected to return to campus after Thanksgiving although, assuming health conditions allow it, students will be allowed to remain in residence halls until the end of the semester.

Our efforts regarding teaching this Fall are grounded on the four basic principles listed below, and I deeply appreciate all that faculty members are doing to support them.

1. The health of our students, faculty, and staff comes first. That means everyone working or taking classes on campus will need to abide by the University’s health regulations.
2. We will use in-person and remote course options to maximize flexibility and equity of access and to accommodate the needs of faculty members and students who may not be able to return to campus because of risks associated with COVID-19.
3. We commit to offering each Maryland student a deeply engaging curriculum whether in-person, blended, or online—along with co-curricular opportunities designed to maximize student learning, involvement, and personal growth.
4. We continue to be committed to creating an inclusive, just, respectful, and supportive environment for all members of the community, striving to ensure that all of our actions and decisions prioritize equity and careful consideration for individuals and groups of students and employees who may be most vulnerable during the pandemic.

Course Design Grants— I have appointed an Instructional Task Force of over 100 campus faculty, staff and administrators, all of whom are working very hard to make the Fall semester as productive, exciting and safe as possible for all students. I want to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have been working all summer on this effort, especially Marcio Oliviera and David Cronrath who are helping to
lead it, and to Rafael Lorente and his team of reviewers who have worked tirelessly to read, and evaluate the 309 Instructional Innovation grants submitted by faculty members in response to the May RFP from the task force. And many thanks to the 500+ faculty members who submitted proposals to work on new ways to deliver blended and online courses and to those participating in Teaching and Learning Transformation Center (TLTC), the Academy for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (AIE), and the Division of IT, Academic Technology workshops—all in order to help make next fall the best it can be in this challenging environment. You are transforming the future!

Health and Safety Arrangements—Just as a trip to the grocery store is different now, with masks and one-way traffic through the store, so will be our campus experience. We have established some rules and procedures in order to keep the campus as safe as possible:

- Everyone coming to campus will be expected to complete a training video and pledge to abide by the CDC-recommended health and safety regulations (see https://return.umd.edu) and to monitor their own health indicators daily.
- All classrooms used for in-person instruction will be equipped with sanitary wipes for surfaces such as seats, desks and tables between each class.
- I ask instructors to allow time for students to sanitize their work area before class and also to sanitize their own work area and whatever classroom equipment will be used. Wipes will be available at the AV station that can be used on touch screens and other equipment.
- Classroom seating will be arranged or marked to indicate safe seating distances.
- All students will be expected to wear masks and maintain social distancing while inside campus buildings and outside when other people are nearby.
- We are still working with health officials to come up with a safe alternative to wearing a mask while teaching. More information will be made available on the outcome of these efforts as soon as possible.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be available in proximity to classrooms.
- Classrooms and high touch areas in buildings will be cleaned and disinfected nightly.
- Please deliver handouts and other types of course material digitally through ELMS-CANVAS and avoid the exchange of paper or any other type of instruction materials.
- Signs will be posted to direct one-way traffic within busy campus buildings and to indicate 6 ft distances in order to minimize the likelihood of congestion in hallways, at entrances, restrooms, etc.
- We are committed to making sure that everyone follows health and safety regulations. We are currently seeking faculty and student feedback on how best to accomplish this and what consequences to have in place for noncompliance. More information on this key issue will be sent as soon as possible.

Additional notes and policies:

In order to reduce the potential for schedule conflicts, **online synchronous classes and assessments** must be scheduled during the Schedule of Classes **assigned meeting time. Posted lectures should also conform to the regular lengths of classes and not significantly exceed regular contact hours.**

Undergraduates who were enrolled in multiple asynchronous classes last spring expressed real concerns about their ability to stay on a schedule, as well as what felt like a significantly increased workload. Please do not add work to your classes thinking that students will have more time in an online delivery mode. If possible, add more structure to the course by sending them reminders about assignments due, upcoming quizzes, and other course details. In addition, discussions with students revealed that many would prefer to be on campus even if most or all of their classes will be online. We expect dorms to be at 85-90% normal capacity and the campus to be busy, in spite of the fact that full in-person instruction will only be at about 20%. We will be enforcing health regulations, as detailed above,
for everyone coming to campus. Information about COVID-19 infection testing will be available soon in a separate communication.

Students who do not wish to attend in person will not be required to do so, and we have assured them that they can still take a full schedule of classes remotely, though not necessarily the exact same courses in every case. Academic advisors can work with students to recommend schedule adjustments as necessary to support student’s continued academic progress.

**We are developing an FAQ regarding class scheduling and campus safety issues, which should be published with the updated Testudo on July 15.**

Once again, thank you for all you are doing to not just overcome the myriad challenges that teaching and learning during a pandemic impose, but actually **to make the fall semester as rewarding and productive as possible for our students no matter what the format of course delivery.**

With gratitude and best wishes,

Mary Ann Rankin

Senior Vice President and Provost