

Subject: SMCCCD Academic Senate Update
Date: Monday, March 16, 2020 at 11:01:52 AM Pacific Daylight Time
From: Wallace, Jeremy
To: All Faculty
CC: Claire, Michael E., Moore, Jamillah, Lopez, Kim, Jackson, Jannett, Taylor-Mendoza, Jennifer, Holtzclaw, Mike, Robinson, Tammy, Mitchell, Karrie, McVean, Aaron, Reed, David, Lacefield, Hyla, Carranza, James, Pouncil, Matais, Hartman, C. Max, Chapple, Tarana, Ridgway, Kristi, Diamond, Heidi, Demsetz, Laura, Wolf, Andreas, Frontiera, Charlene, Duncan, Krystal, Moe, Rolin, Kane, Michael, Morello, Jr., Joseph, Gibson, Chris, Hernandez, Raymond, Redding Lapuz, Danni, Escobar, Luis, Schwarz, Karen, Rojo, Richard
Attachments: image001.png

Colleagues,

I apologize for length of time between emails – I wanted to make sure that all the district communications were given priority, not to mention things have been evolving quickly in our county and in our district since Wednesday. I know the last several days have been incredibly stressful; the continuity of instruction is a huge lift for us, and it is coming as most of us are dealing with myriad personal disruptions – kids’ schools closing, caring for small children and other family members, even grocery shopping has become stressful. In these extraordinary circumstances, we need to continue to support our loved ones, to practice self-care, and to just be kind to one another. We are all in this together, and if we move forward with feelings of compassion and kinship, we will certainly get through this.

As you saw in this weekend’s district communications, the campuses will be undergoing many changes in order to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus. These changes have been in response to San Mateo Health Department and statewide restrictions and guidelines. Furthermore, the district academic senate has been in close collaboration with district administration in order to find the balance between public health and the continuity of instruction.

Please read the following carefully and direct any questions to your deans and/or senate leaders:

1. In order to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus, **access to the campus will be restricted. This is not to say that we cannot come to campus to work. Our offices will still be open, and we are still allowed to use them.** However, I have been told by district administration that facilities is now required, under the new guidelines from the department of health, to sanitize any area on campus that has been used, so if we use our offices, our facilities colleagues will have to clean them each day we use them (not to mention work rooms, bathrooms, etc.). **As a result, faculty should only come to campus when working from home is not feasible. If you would like to come to campus, you will need to contact your dean.** And in order to facilitate the sanitation of the campuses and to record who is on campus, public safety will be checking people in/out as they enter/leave campus. I know this is inconvenient, but it necessary to protect public health.
2. Effective immediately, the District Academic Senate is advising all committees **to cancel/postpone all non-essential meetings.** This transition to virtual learning is a difficult one, so members of the faculty should be focus their time and attention to this transition. With that being said, essential committees should continue to meet via Zoom, as necessary. These committees include the academic senates, curriculum committees, and institutional planning and budget committees. I will be in touch with the senates to discuss these meetings vis-à-vis the Brown Act. Similarly, local senates and administrative leadership should discuss postponing program review deadlines.

3. The District Academic Senate understands that this transition to at-home teaching and learning will be particularly disruptive to lab courses, performance courses, kinesiology, and studio art. As a result, **the senate is going to work on providing virtual forums for discipline experts to come together to collaborate on innovative strategies for offering these courses online** for at least the next few weeks. **More details soon.**
4. Due to public health concerns and restrictions imposed by the San Mateo Health Department, the campuses won't be able to offer computer access to students. I can assure you, however, that the district administration is doing everything they can to connect students to the technology they need to continue their studies.

These are extraordinary times, and they will require heroic efforts on our part to maintain instructional continuity. It is a reality that many students will not engage with us online – they will have children and families to look after, many of them will have more acute housing and food insecurity, and some of them might not know how to navigate the digital landscape. We should not penalize these students, and like I said in previous emails, faculty should not be dropping students from their classes during this time. Instead, we should be ready to help these students catch up, either when we get back or through the incomplete process.

The other reality is that many students are going to show up: they will be on Canvas completing their coursework; they will be hopping on Zoom to listen to our lectures; and they will be reaching out for help on their work. We need to do the best we can to continue our courses for these students. A good number of them will need your courses to transfer in the fall, and all of the students who show up virtually will be there because they want to complete their studies. It is easy to feel anxiety and despair about this movement to online teaching and learning, but at the end of the day, we will have students who still want to learn, so we must do the best we can. Will our virtual courses be as good as our face-to-face courses? I think the obvious answer is no. But we should all strive to do the best we can under our professional and personal circumstances. Please refer to the district's guide to transition instruction to a virtual space: <https://instructionalcontinuity.smccd.edu/>. And additional information on the district's coronavirus response can be found at <https://emergency.smccd.info/>.

I apologize for the long email, but I want to make sure you all have the information you need to do your jobs as effectively as possible. Take care of yourselves and your families, and, of course, please stay healthy. I am looking forward to seeing you all (and our students) in person again. This pandemic will pass, and we will be stronger at the other end of it.

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