

# San Mateo County Community College District Academic Senate

## Statement on Campus Closures

Campus closures are an unexpected and regrettable response to emergencies. Given that they can disrupt the teaching and learning process, faculty are often in a situation of not knowing how to meet the outcomes of the class and serve students while grappling with the loss of instructional time. While there are no finite answers to these questions, the District Academic Senate has compiled a series of considerations that faculty can keep in mind when making adjustments during or after a campus closure.

### **Communicating With Students**

During campus closures, it is imperative to communicate with students in every way possible; ideally, students will already have an established means of electronic communication with you. In a campus closure, faculty are encouraged to reach out to students to find out:

- Whether the circumstances of the campus closure have affected them personally, and how
- What access to materials and technology they have
- What supports they need (disabilities accommodation, library, tutoring, mentoring) to be able to complete your class work

Erring on the side of over-communication in these circumstances is likely to be seen as support and effort that students will appreciate. Also understand that if students' access has been impacted, they may not receive your messages during the school closure period.

### **Assigning Independent Work as Instruction or Make-up**

While college students can be expected to do a certain amount of independent work, it is unreasonable to simply assign all missed work to students upon return to class. Before creating independent assignments, faculty may want to consider the following:

- **Balance:** Consider the number of hours of a reasonable balance of workload for any student at any point in the course. Determine whether this additional assigned work could result in a barrier to success.
- **Multiple classes:** Since many of our students take two or more courses, the assigning of make-up work could cause students to face an insurmountable amount of work that could result in non-completion of one or more courses.
- **Learning Modality:** Students in face-to-face classes cannot reasonably be expected to cover the missed content via online or remote instruction. Likewise, many students' only access to online tools may be through the campus labs and wifi. In most circumstances, things that are already part of the course's regular operation (text chapter reading, weekly obligations online, homework problems from previous lessons, discussions, journals, etc.) can be assigned online in reasonable amounts without undue burden on the student. Faculty are encouraged to limit requesting online catchup or independent work to the following:
  - Reading ahead in the text assigned for the course
  - Continuing with existing scheduled events in the course management system (i.e. weekly auto-graded quizzes or journals)
  - Engaging in previously scheduled online discussion groups or most long-term, out-of-class projects

- **Access and Equity Impact**

When the entire campus is closed, it includes the library and learning center, so students will not have public access to computers, printers, textbooks, course-specific software, and tutoring or mentoring. This is particularly concerning for DRC students who may not have access to their accommodations (e.g. assistive technology). Assigning missed work from the closure, absent of instructional support, can disproportionately affect low-income and foster youth students and students with disabilities, creating an issue of educational equity.

### **Technology-enhanced Instruction Considerations**

Even online courses can be impacted by a campus closure. Here are some guidelines that may help faculty in adjusting their course plans in response to a campus closure in order to ensure that students are not penalized for missed days of instruction.

- **Fully online classes** may be impacted by campus closures if the closure affects the course management system or students' use of campus resources for online instruction. Before proceeding with normal course operation, please check in with all of your online students to ensure that their access has not been disrupted, and make accommodations such as extended timelines or flexible credit for those whose access is affected by the closure or extenuating circumstances. Remember that tutoring and other support services for an online class is typically derived from in-person support in the learning center, access to which a campus closure will impact.
- **Hybrid classes** may have engendered in students a higher expectation of independent learning than in a fully face-to-face course due to the online portion. However, faculty should still use caution in shifting too much new content or skill to the online portion of the class. Faculty teaching flipped classes where new content is regularly introduced online must also recognize the absence of the practice portion in the face-to-face portion of the class, and it is vital to maintain not just the breadth of the content but the depth of the instruction. Faculty may consider altering portions of the instructional content and presenting it in a different way so as not to adversely impact learning.

### **Options for accommodating missed time and content**

Faculty are encouraged to evaluate the missed content in terms of quality versus quantity. Faculty can focus on the learning outcomes for the course and may find ways to reduce the volume of the catch-up work without negatively impacting student learning. When making decisions about how to address the missed work, faculty should consider how to preserve continuity in the current unit without disrupting the learning process any further. Options in response to campus closures can include:

- Extending deadlines
- Working with deans to extend lab hours
- Assigning portions of work to be extra credit or optional
- Shortening, reducing, or simplifying assignments to allow students to catch up upon return
- Finding ways to assess that students have met the outcomes via integrating content, skills, or activities such as two outcomes met with one activity

### **Missed appointments and office hours**

Office hours and meetings with students are also impacted by campus closures. If reasonable in the context of the class, alternative means of connecting with students could include email, discussion forums, or phone or video conferences. Faculty are encouraged to remain mindful of students who require additional support and to prioritize these students upon return to campus to ensure they keep up with the course. It is also important to remain mindful of students lacking in computer technology. Although it is not required to make up office hours that were cancelled by campus closure, faculty can consider offering additional face-to-face office hours once the closure has ended.

### **Other Concerns Due to Campus Closures**

- **Faculty compensation:** Barring unforeseen and unusual circumstances, all faculty scheduled during the closures should expect compensation as normal; district personnel will issue statements to confirm at the time of closure.
- **Student Learning Outcomes Assessment:** Campus closures that prevent faculty from completing the outcomes of the course may result in campuswide discussions on how to ensure learning outcomes. For more guidance, please contact your dean, your faculty mentor, or your Academic Senate leadership.