

Guidance Concerning Course Modality Changes During Spring 2021

Colleagues,

As the fall term ends and preparation for spring begins, it is important to reflect on lessons learned. Our students have provided clear and extensive feedback about their challenges this semester. Beyond the frustrations of technology and the loss of socialization so important to the college experience, they have told us that unexpected changes in instructional modality are extremely disruptive and frustrating.

Many of our students have enrolled in classes for the spring term. They have evaluated their experiences this fall, they have reflected on their learning, and they have selected a schedule of classes that best suits their individual needs. We must not make unnecessary and unplanned changes to instructional modality this spring. To do so is both disingenuous and disrespectful to the needs of those we serve. Ample opportunities have existed to make modifications to instructional modality. Every effort was made to accommodate the needs and wishes of instructors.

We have learned that several types of modality change are of particular concern:

If a class was planned as asynchronous online, it cannot be changed to synchronous online, hybrid, or face-to-face.

Students who register for an asynchronous online class are expecting to engage in the course content according to their own schedule. The modality of these courses should not be changed to require students to engage in class material at a specific time because some students will not be available at those times.

If a class was planned as face-to-face or hybrid, it cannot be changed to fully online.

Students selecting these modalities are expecting to engage in person with their professor and fellow students. In many cases they have chosen courses of this type because they believe they learn better and have a more complete educational experience when an in person component is included. Likewise they might know that they have challenges with technology access that would make online learning difficult or impossible.

For the spring term, any change to instructional modality from what is recorded on the schedule of classes must be approved by the Department Chair, Dean, and Vice Chancellor.

Thank you for your extraordinary efforts this semester. I wish you a calm, safe, and restorative winter break.



Carl N. Drummond
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs