UTRGV Academic Continuity Plan

Writing & Language Studies Academic Continuity Plan
College of Liberal Arts
March 16, 2020

As part of our WLS continuity plan, Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for WLS courses remain unaltered. All remote delivery methods that WLS faculty implement allow for our usual processes to assess SLOs for programs and general education classes.

At the end of the document is the WLS Organizational Chart/Call Tree, noting leadership roles within the department and relevant contact information.

I. **Staff Communication & Continuity**

   A. Social distancing measures are being followed in the WLS main offices on both campuses, and health measures (regular hand-washing, sanitizing, and office cleaning after visits) are in place,. Anyone visiting the offices will be asked screening questions (posted on doors in English and Spanish) about symptoms, travel, etc. before entering and using the offices.

   B. I'm holding staff meetings on Mondays at 9am to make sure that office matters, work study assignments, and faculty/student support strategies are clear and that staff understand their individual work options moving forward.

   C. Staff needs for working remotely have been identified and addressed by Admins, and all staff have been advised to work remotely if they desire once reasons are documented by the WLS Chair.

II. **Student Communication & Continuity**

   A. WLS revised the distributed survey template into an Office 365 secure Form to collect info for student contact and technology availability/familiarity. [emails to faculty sent 03.13.20 for feedback and 03.16.20 for duplicatable template]

   B. I have instructed teachers to remind students of the importance of checking their emails on a regular basis and to access https://www.utrgv.edu/emergencypreparedness/resources/covid-19/index.htm for up-to-date UTRGV information on COVID-19.

   C. International students. Though federal requirements call for international students to take the majority of their courses to be face to face, most international students will be working off-campus with their own IT. Exceptions would be those working on campus because they lack resources and those taking courses that cannot be taught remotely. WLS has identified no courses taught in the department that require face to face delivery. WLS will distribute international student enrollment information to relevant WLS instructors. Faculty will continue to interact with international students regularly, though remotely, and student course performance and participation/attendance will be monitored as appropriate to remote delivery.

   D. Faculty are converting classes to online delivery through March 22, which includes at a minimum uploading revised syllabi to Blackboard, contacting students about course details

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moving forward for Spring 2020, and establishing a clear and accessible means for students to monitor their course progress.

E. Internship courses. They have discontinued internship hours with partners and made plans to evaluate accumulated internship hours OR prompting reflective writing assignments relevant to internship work in the case that students had not accumulated internship hours prior to Spring Break.

III. Faculty Continuity & Communication

A. WLS Meetings. Instead of regularly scheduled department meetings, I have created a monthly newsletter to share department business matters, university information, etc., to keep lines of communication and information-sharing open even while COVID-19 course conversion is our priority. I have also kept Zoom meetings for our March department meetings on March 18 & 20 and converted them to open forums for faculty. Beginning March 27, I will host Friday WLS voluntary check-in Zoom meetings to make sure that I am available to answer questions and address challenges throughout the rest of Spring 2020.

B. I've advised WLS standing committees to postpone meetings and non-continuity related committee business until March 30, at which time remote meetings can be held as needed.

C. ILT Teams. I established Innovative Learning & Teaching (ILT) teams thru emails on March 12-13. These small teams each have a leader responsible for identifying questions/support which need addressing at three levels to effectively manage communication and draw on the depth of online expertise in WLS. [WLS ILT Information]

1. Teams will identify courses for which online delivery is not viable and work together with me and relevant experts to handle them.

2. Teams will work to adapt service-learning components of courses to follow all University COVID-19 guidelines for safety.

3. Teams will pass on questions that need CLA support/awareness from March 16-22.

4. Tuesday, March 17: Distributed a survey to faculty to verify course conversion details, Blackboard syllabi uploads, technology needs, and any additional support that is needed. See Appendix A for tentative checklist.

D. COLTT Support. I sent faculty info on COLTT support, including upcoming trainings, from George Handley (Instructional Designer). This and more COVID-19 information (announcements, travel, FAQs, work study plans, and instructional support/ideas are now available thru the WLS COVID-19 Information & Support page. Also, see extensive suggestions in Appendix B.

E. Research, Service, & Teaching Impact. I created an Office 365 Form to collect information on activities, especially scholarly ones, that were impacted by COVID-19. [WLS COVID-19 Impact] Faculty with travel funds remaining are investigating scholarly opportunities that do not involve travel to use those funds if they remain available to us. The Research Division and Grants and Contracts will be consulted as needed.

F. Teacher Certification Requirements. These exist for Teacher Certification BAs and are course-based and handled outside of WLS. Affected students will work with the College of Ed and follow guidelines provided by the state/accrediting body.

G. Service. Service activities involving committees will be handled online or thru face to face meetings in small groups, making sure that Zoom access is made available upon any faculty request.

Appendix A: WLS Continuity Planning for Course Conversion

What to Do for Each of Your Classes

1. Determine if your students will have Internet access in the event of an emergency or catastrophic event.
2. Establish teaching objectives for this time period (material covered, explore new topics).
3. Communicate with students
   - How? (email, telephone, Navigate, Facebook, Blackboard, Zoom)
   - What? (course work, updates, questions)
4. Develop and/or make your content available (e.g., unit assignments, homework).
5. Promote the utilization of texts, other reading materials or online resources
6. Determine if distance learning will affect access to software, for example, lab–based software or science laboratories only available on site.
7. Access and communicate with students during emergency.

Checklist for Course Conversion

YES	NO	Course Details
☐	☐	My Blackboard courses contain the most current course information.
☐	☐	I have a way to distribute assignments to my students online.
☐	☐	I use audio or video materials in class and can share these with my students.
☐	☐	I use the UTRGV Library services to make materials available to my students online.
		In the Case of Internet Unavailability
☐	☐	I have a class roster and grade information available offline
☐	☐	I have a way to distribute assignments to my students by phone or text.
☐	☐	I have updated my syllabus to include an alternate assignment(s). These may include discussion projects items, readings, end of chapter materials, and student questions.
		Student Communication
☐	☐	My students know how to contact me if they have a question.
☐	☐	I have a way to facilitate discussion with groups of students remotely.
☐	☐	Students have a way to contact each other and collaborate online.
☐	☐	I use the UTRGV Library services to make materials available to my students online.
		Distance Learning
☐	☐	My students can read, listen to, and/or watch my lectures online.
☐	☐	My students can turn in homework and take exams online.
☐	☐	I have a way to respond to student work and securely publish scores online.
☐	☐	I know how to submit final grades to the Registrar online.
		Instructor Access
☐	☐	I have a computer or laptop at home that has the software and Internet connectivity I need to work remotely.
☐	☐	My TAs have the knowledge and capability to remotely conduct quiz sessions (if applicable).

Appendix B: COLTT Recommendations for Academic Continuity Plan

Purpose
To ensure The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) continues providing educational services online for any period that the campus may be closed due to a natural disaster or emergency, the following recommendations may be established as a plan to help Faculty create an online version of their courses via UTRGV's Learning Management System (Blackboard).

Objectives
This document provides the general information required for UTRGV to continue providing its educational services and mitigate disruption of the teaching and learning process.

Making the Shift to Online for Academic Continuity
All classes in a semester have a corresponding Blackboard course (shell) even if the class is scheduled to meet on campus. In addition, all Faculty, staff, and students have access to UTRGV Blackboard via the MyUTRGV login. This facilitates the ability to transition a face-to-face class into online delivery. Three different areas are recommended to visit, Infrastructure, Professional Development, and Support:

1. Infrastructure. The recommendation is to use current educational technologies and assuring that infrastructure handles mass movement to an online environment.
   - Blackboard LMS - Cloud
   - Blackboard Collaborate - Cloud
   - Zoom - Cloud
   - Panopto Lecture Capture – Cloud

   *For lab sections, find virtual labs online or arrange for alternative activities in place of the lab.

2. Professional Development. In the event of campus closure, professional development is recommended in the use of the technologies and best practices in online pedagogy. The following are some topics recommended for the types of classroom activities in an online format:
   - Communicating with students (Announcements, Emails, Messages)
     - There are several online tools in Blackboard that can be used to maintain communication with your students. Select one or two of these tools that students can come to expect will be your primary means of relaying important and relevant information.
     - We recommend using [Blackboard Announcements](#), which will post a message in your course, and which can also be sent as an email.
     - Tell your students where to locate course information in Blackboard and provide detailed instructions for assignments, online meetings, and tools that will be used to substitute in-class time.
     - We recommend adding this information to your syllabus or in a course folder entitled, "Start Here."

   - Take attendance
     - Particularly important for student financial aid

   - Uploading course materials (Syllabus, PowerPoints, Chapter notes)

- [Post your syllabus on Blackboard](#) and update it with course changes as needed.
- Provide hand-outs and [course materials](#) in your Blackboard course(s).
- In Blackboard, you can upload files, including DOC, DOCX, HTM, HTML, MP3, MPG, PDF, PPT, PPTX, XLS, XLSX, RTF, TXT, ZIP, and most image types.
- You can also provide links to anywhere on the internet, including case studies, videos, websites, etc.

- Delivering lectures,
  - Synchronous – Live (Bb Collaborate or Zoom)
    - Meet virtually over [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#) to hold online real- time, interactive classes and office hours. This allows you to share your screen, poll students, live-chat, and open breakout rooms for smaller discussions. These sessions can also be recorded for those that cannot attend a synchronous class
    - Use [Zoom,](#) the campus-licensed web conferencing service
    - Host phone-based audio conferences for small classes. You can use call-in telephone numbers provided by either Blackboard Collaborate or Zoom
  - Asynchronous – Recorded (Panopto)
    - Record a narrated presentation (narrated PowerPoint) with Panopto and embed it the course
    - Recording full lectures can be cumbersome for instructors and students, so consider [how to redesign them](#)
    - Video lectures can be recorded and streamed in Blackboard using a webcam and a microphone. Most laptops have integrated webcams and mics.
    - We recommend that you consider recording your lectures for use outside of crisis scenarios. Digitizing your in-class instruction can provide opportunities for easier ADA compliance (transcripts, captions), can provide you a backup of your work, and can be used as a substitute for your students when you are out

- Distributing, collecting, and grading student work (discussions, reflections, assignments)
  - Use the [Blackboard Assignment tool](#) to collect, grade and return assignments electronically.
  - Track student grades in the [Blackboard Grade Center](#).
  - Consider how you could incorporate alternative course materials and [adapt assignments to suit online learning](#) in case of an extended emergency.

- Administering tests (online exams)
  - Prepare online [quizzes, surveys, or tests](#) where appropriate using Blackboard.

*The recommendation is not to schedule exams during the event due to a possible lack of reliable internet access from the students

In Preparation for carrying out professional development
- Create an "Enhanced Instructional Design Team" (EID) to assist COLTT in the PDs.
- Identify key Faculty willing to participate in the EID Team

- ‣ Prepare tutorials online for Faculty and students
- ‣ Coordinate training sessions with Department Chairs
- ‣ Training Sessions could be Basic, Intermediate and Advanced

3. Faculty and Student Support During the Event. There will be assistance available via toll-free phone, email, and online to all Faculty and students needing help with Blackboard online tools. An emergency tab for students will be also activated in Blackboard with links to online tutorials and downloadable manuals along with assigned emergency contact information.

   *It is recommended that the Extended Instructional Design team provides support to Faculty during the event.

   In Preparation for carrying out professional development
   - ‣ A new tab with all emergency information will be activated in Blackboard
   - ‣ Activate a Blackboard organization for ITS-Online Learning Staff to communicate before, during, and after the event.
   - ‣ Check inventory and see how many laptops, microphones, and web cameras are available for Faculty and Supporting Staff.
   - ‣ Number of personnel
   - ‣ Prepare a list of EID Faculty and Staff with contact information (name, email, ph#, Cell# Emergency Contact.
   - ‣ Equipment needed: Computers (Desktops, Tablets or laptops) Printers/Supplies
   - ‣ Connectivity needed: High-speed broadband connection at designated area: UTRGV Campus, Remote Central Location, or Staff Home.

COLTT's mission is to support Faculty in creating quality, engaging, pedagogically-sound courses in a digital environment. We offer services such as instructional design, instructional technology, professional development, accessibility & support through a 24/7 support center.

Sources & References

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