

COVID-19 Communication Update

Dear Faculty and Staff,

I hope this note finds you doing well and keeping your spirits up. Maintaining your physical and mental health is so important and I trust you will take time (and precautions) for both. We are certainly settling into new routines but many are reporting how exhausting the deluge of Zoom meetings and online obligations can be. Please balance yourselves and find the time to enjoy the things you **enjoy multiple times each day!**

For those of us who have been impacted by COVID-19 with losses of family and friends, my heart and sympathies are with you. Unfortunately, at this point, I fear none of us has escaped its impact. Let us persevere for our own sake as well as for those we may have lost or who struggled mightily through the illness.

I ask you to read this email in its entirety as I feel there are important elements throughout.

Academics

We continue our push forward to the conclusion of this semester. A semester that presented us with ultimate challenges as educators, professionals, and humans. You should take time to celebrate your accomplishments and I encourage you to do so by connecting with a colleague, a student (former or present), a family member, or a friend. Continue your outstanding work even when the remote work environment presents challenges of inaccessibility to your campus job, kids and pets running around the house (I know all about this!) and other distractions or complications of working from home.

We are working on a way to celebrate the class of 2020 from a University perspective but also the College of Art and Design and our Schools as well. Stay tuned. **And, please join us for our All-College meeting on May 4th at 3PM (invitation was sent via outlook earlier this week).**

As we look to close-out this semester, a few reminders and requests from our Academic Advisors to bring us over the finish line and support one another and our students to the conclusion of this academic year:

Continue to send student alerts as needed using Starfish.

- Be factual and encouraging.
- Let students know if they are passing—or can pass.
 - Let students know what they can do to improve/submit to receive a passing grade.
- Be forgiving when possible.
 - Some students are turning in work, but may not be able to log into any/all Zoom meetings due to family situations and/or internet issues.

- Avoid incompletes at all costs. They are likely not appropriate grades.
 - If you have a situation that you think may warrant an incomplete, please consult with your director, an associate dean, or Deb to talk through options.
 - Remember, a “D” is passing and students can choose alternative grading.

Many students have had to make multiple moves, sometimes home and then back to Rochester based on technical or other needs.

- Flexible due dates are appreciated.

A Look Ahead

We still have challenges ahead and we don’t know the timeline of when we will return to “normal.” Things are looking positive but that doesn’t mean we are out of the woods just yet. So, another theme of this message will be endurance, vigilance, and preparation for various scenarios. To this end, I am strongly encouraging faculty and staff to begin preparing for a fall semester where we may have some sort of compromised access. I don’t know what this will look like—a delayed opening, strict social distancing that modifies our capability to host all students and faculty, continuing with some remote delivery, or other scenarios??? Again, as artists, designers, crafts people, and creatives, we are uniquely positioned to adapt and even flourish in the face of unknown environments and problems.

In the time you have with the remainder of this semester and while we are still not traveling, **I implore all faculty to prepare four weeks of coursework that you could deliver via MyCourses and remotely for the beginning of the fall 2020 semester.**

I will admit this is “an ounce of prevention ...” recommendation and I hope we don’t need it but prepping four weeks of remote coursework for the beginning of the semester will put you in the best position to manage potential restrictions or modifications we may experience for the fall semester. You may ask “What if we don’t need this?” or “I don’t feel a course I am teaching can be delivered online for the entirety of the semester?”

To these questions I would answer, first, “I hope we don’t need it and that we are back to normal in August! Maybe us spinning our wheels on developing four weeks of coursework was just the medicine to reverse ‘Murphy’s Law.’ Additionally, the online prep work you conduct will certainly be valuable in one way or another.” To the second question, “Even in courses that require the on-campus resources, prepping for four weeks will help should we experience a delayed opening or need to split classes into hybrid modes in order to ‘de-densify’ the physical classroom settings (splitting a class’ student body so some of the work can be performed online and some in campus studios and classrooms).”

I just learned that RIT’s Coronavirus site even has pages dedicated to preparing courses for summer and fall: <https://www.rit.edu/coronavirus/planning-for-future-courses>

And our InsideCAD still provides great links to resources and the CAD Tech information pages/links: <https://inside.cad.rit.edu/>

Overall, I want us all (staff and faculty) to prepare ourselves to support our students and one another in case we encounter modified approaches in the future. Again, I hope this won’t be the case, but I’d rather start thinking about this now than August! I am happy to field questions you may have and also leverage your network of colleagues at RIT and the broader field of art, craft, and design. Your

school and program directors, as well as ILI, academic advisors, and dean's office are all here for support.

I look forward to connecting digitally soon (and in person as soon as possible!).

In Creative Spirit,
Todd