

Important Academic Continuity Information

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To: [academicaffairs](mailto:academicaffairs@westfield.ma.edu) <academicaffairs@westfield.ma.edu>

Dear Faculty and Staff,

As you are all aware from the message earlier today, Westfield State will extend the Spring Break period for students, suspending all on ground classes for the week of March 16-20. During the week of March 23-27, we are asking for all coursework to be conducted remotely, in an effort to provide time for cleaning and to support mitigating the spread of COVID-19.

We recognize that this is a challenge for some and is a particular challenge for those engaged in experiential learning activities, but we must all do our best to be flexible in this uncharted territory.

Teaching and Learning

Under the leadership of Dean Tom Raffensperger, the staff in the Center for Instructional Technology, Technology Support, and Media Services have been working on the implementation of a continuity plan to support remote teaching and learning. The webpage for CIT is now hosting general advice and resource links <http://www.westfield.ma.edu/cit/teaching-remotely-getting-started-and-resources/>. The university has also purchased increased data storage to accommodate expansion of campus use of PLATO (Blackboard).

In addition, during the week of March 16-20, Technology Support will offer in-person workshops in:

- Library resources for remote instruction and learning
- Using Zoom for instruction and meetings
- Supporting student technology needs
- Getting on PLATO (Blackboard)
- Open hands-on help session for supporting remote instruction

Details and registration information will be coming soon.

Because so many institutions are moving in this same direction, there is a plethora of resources available in addition to our campus resources. I know some of you have been discussing this issue with departmental colleagues and/or on discipline-based listservs and websites. I thank you for this work and encourage you to find the options that will best accommodate your course content and pedagogy and to share those with your colleagues.

Advising and Registration

We will continue with our scheduled academic advising and registration dates. Advising appointments scheduled between March 16 and March 27 should be conducted via telephone or if need be, via email. In either case, as a best practice and given the unusual circumstances, please keep some written record of the course recommendations made to students and place those in their advising file in the academic department. We are working on an electronic version of the course scheduling form and this will be distributed as soon as it is ready.

Support

All university offices/departments will remain open and function as usual. I have asked the college deans to work directly with academic department chairs and with you to provide the necessary support as needed. While staff on campus will be available to assist with technology needs and training, I ask that faculty and staff work with each other to manage discipline-specific or office-specific issues utilizing

resources available to you. Please contact your dean with questions regarding support needed to activate or access materials you may find.

Please note that a separate communication from Student Affairs/Academic Affairs will be sent to students. If you receive questions from your students unrelated to academic issues, please be sure to forward those to your college dean, who will triage those inquiries to the appropriate campus representative. Please note that support for students with technology resource challenges can be found on the CIT webpage (<http://www.westfield.ma.edu/cit/teaching-remotely-getting-started-and-resources/>).

There will be many questions as we move ahead. We will use the remainder of this week and next to begin to sort out some of these issues. I thank you for input, flexibility, and patience during this time.

Again, I recognize that these are challenging circumstances and that beyond our workplace, we have personal concerns for family and friends. Within this context, I know that we all do the very best we can to support each other and our students.

Thank you,
Diane

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