

Dear Colleagues,

Good morning! Today we begin our all-too-short recess for transitioning our students and courses to remote learning for the remainder of the semester.

I'll try to limit these emails to 2 per day and then pull back as we're well into the new formats and communications.

In the meantime, my colleagues across CUNY are finding and creating resources to support faculty; the list below was shared by Joe Ugoretz, Senior Associate Dean and Chief Academic Officer at Macaulay Honors College (attribution can be found at the end of the list). Please consider these tips today:

1. Be kind to yourself and your students. Everyone is stressed, even if they're playing cool. That includes faculty. And that's okay.
2. Many universities have a considerable number of pedagogical experts that, quite frankly, I have only been dimly aware of until yesterday. Be kind to these people. They are suddenly very slammed.
3. There are a much larger number of faculty on university campuses that desperately need to retool. We have faculty who do not know how to use even the course management software that we've been on since I've been here (12 years). It is moments like this when that disparity becomes really fraught. It is also unacceptable.
4. You will not recreate your classroom, and you cannot hold yourself to that standard. Moving a class to a distance learning model in a day's time excludes the possibility of excellence. Give yourself a break.
5. Prioritize. What do students REALLY NEED TO KNOW for two weeks. This one is hard for me. But we have to strip it all the way down--in my campaigns class, that means I need them to post infographics on their research and now post narrative context and slides. But I'm going to punt on presentations because we just don't have time. Which sucks. But these are not normal circumstances.
6. If you're making videos, student viewership drops off precipitously at 5 minutes. Make them capsule videos if you make them. And UPLOAD to YOUTUBE because it TRANSCRIBES for you. Do not assume your audio is good enough or that students can understand without transcription. This is like using a microphone at meetings--I don't care if you don't need it, someone else does and they don't want to ask.

7. Make assignments lower or no stakes if you're using a new platform. Get students used to just using the platform. Then you can do something higher stakes. Do not ask students to do a high stakes exam or assignment on a new platform.

8. Stay in contact with students, and stay transparent. Talk to them about WHY you're prioritizing certain things or asking them to read or do certain things. I've moved to doing that in all of my face-to-face teaching anyway, and it improves student buy-in because they know content and delivery are purposeful.

9. Do not read on best practices for distance learning. That's not the situation we're in. We're in triage. Distance learning, when planned, can be really excellent. That's not what this is. Do what you absolutely have to and ditch what you can. Thinking you can manage best practices in a day or a week will lead to feeling like you've failed.

10. Be particularly kind to your graduating seniors. They're already panicking, and this isn't going to help. If you teach a class where they need to have completed something for certification, to apply to grad school, or whatever, figure out plan B. But talk to them. Radio silence, even if you're working, is not okay.

Written by Amy Young, Associate Professor & Chair, Department of Communication, Pacific Lutheran University