

March 6, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Fresno State is monitoring the COVID-19 situation very closely, and we have an Incident Response Team meeting weekly to review this evolving situation and to advise if any additional resources or communications are needed to support our campus community.

Please know that if we need to make any adjustments to instruction schedules or campus operations, we will communicate accordingly.

There is a chance, however, that we may see an increase in student absences in classrooms. I would appreciate your being flexible, understanding, and compassionate with students who are worried about the virus. Specifically, we are asking our faculty to:

- Relax attendance policies where absences affect grades, if these absences are related to COVID-19 or the flu.
- Provide remote or online alternatives for participation points.
- Allow remote submission of assignments through Canvas or email.
- Communicate course policies early and often to all students, using channels you normally use. Be clear about how you will communicate to them and about the adjustments you will make to the course.
- Provide options to make up missed exams and assignments.

In addition, all faculty members are encouraged to have a [continuity teaching plan](#) for their classes in case of an illness, conference travel, natural disaster, or other emergency. This allows faculty to adapt quickly and provide instruction remotely, as needed. Many faculty members at Fresno State have successfully completed training to provide some or all of their course instruction online through the Quality Learning and Teaching. The Center for Faculty Excellence has a [number of resources](#) that can be leveraged by all faculty members who are exploring best practices for online and blended learning.

Regarding your health: If you are sick, please stay home. If you do not create an online alternative to your class session, please work with your department or unit head to have your classes covered. If a class session is going to be cancelled, communicate this to your students as soon as possible so they do not come to class unnecessarily. In addition, let your students know that you will adjust expectations for turning in assignments and any exam schedules, if your absence will have an impact on those.

Alternatively, even if a student is sick, we cannot mandate that a student leave the classroom unless we have a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19. As such, I would encourage you to have an empathetic conversation with the student, offer an alternate

assignment until they are feeling better, and also encourage them to visit our Student Health Center.

Thank you for your collaborative efforts. This is an unfamiliar situation, and we are aware that it causes distress. Be assured that we are monitoring the situation closely and planning for action – should the need arise. As always, our primary focus remains on the well-being of the campus community.

Warm Regards,

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Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs