

# Provost's Corner

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## *Special Edition: COVID-19 Updates*

These are certainly unprecedented times. In my 30+ years as a higher education administrator and educator, I have never experienced a challenge like the one that we are now facing with the COVID-19 pandemic that has so substantially, and so swiftly, changed all aspects of what we do and how we interact with each other and with our students. With this unprecedented challenge, however, I've seen remarkable innovation, creativity, collaboration, and optimism. One of the primary reasons why I chose to come to Potsdam was the genuine sense of engagement that I saw between the campus' faculty/staff and their students. I am so proud of what I continue to see, every day, as our campus comes together to support each other and the continued success of our students. Thank you—all of you—for your extraordinary efforts and advocacy in these very unique times of challenge.

Our current situation is a fluid one, as we continue to receive new updates and regulations from the governor and SUNY system. However, I did want to take this opportunity to update you on current efforts within Academic Affairs—given that these might (and likely will) change on a regular basis. Most importantly, though, I want to hear from *you*. What best practices are you finding to be most successful with your students? What resources would you like to pass along to your colleagues? And what can we do to continue to support you, your peers, and your students? Please let me know, and we will continue to provide updates, resources, and whatever support that we can to ensure that those qualities that make SUNY Potsdam uniquely special will continue to thrive.

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### *Campus Updates*

**COVID-19 Academic Affairs Response Subcommittee.** The Academic COVID-19 Response Subcommittee has been formed as an ancillary to the campus' Coronavirus Taskforce/Emergency Response Resource Group (ERRG). On March 9, 2020, the President charged the Academic COVID-19 Response Subcommittee with the following:

*The academic subcommittee is tasked with planning in the event that our campus community is impacted by the international spread of COVID-19/Coronavirus. This subcommittee will explore:*

- *alternate delivery options including distance education;*
- *recommendations for changes in academic policies including but not limited to withdrawal/leave of absences;*
- *contingency plans for students who are currently off-site completing an applied learning experience (interns/student teachers);*
- *access to library resources and support services;*
- *advising alternatives; and*
- *other relevant topics.*

The Subcommittee is chaired by *Allen Grant*, Dean of the School of Education and Professional Studies. If you have issues that you would like the Subcommittee to consider, please contact Dean Grant at [grantac@potsgdam.edu](mailto:grantac@potsgdam.edu).

Please also note that a webpage has been developed on the SUNY Potsdam website that will be updated frequently, as more information on COVID-19's campus impacts becomes available. Please visit the page regularly for detailed information: <https://www.potsgdam.edu/covid19>. For more information on COVID-19, visit: <http://cdc.gov/covid19>.

**Teaching Remotely Website.** The CCI, in collaboration with faculty and staff across the campus, have developed a [Teaching Remotely Website](#) to assist faculty in adapting to a virtual learning and teaching environment. This site is updated regularly, so be sure to check the site often! Included in this site are the following links and resources:

- [Teaching Remotely](#)- A "how do I start" step-by-step process check list.
- [How do I...](#) Helps you find tools to accomplish a specific action or activity (e.g. How do I schedule an online meeting?).
- [Tech Tools](#)- Provides training videos and resource links to programs and apps (listed alphabetically).
- [Remote Advising](#)- Provides info and resources on how to do remote advising.

*Have additional questions, a request for specific training, or ideas for additional resources?* Send them to [cci@potsgdam.edu](mailto:cci@potsgdam.edu).

**Resources from the Libraries.** The SUNY Potsdam Libraries have created a [Library Resource website](#) that includes updated resources and services available from the College Libraries, in effect for the remainder of the Spring, 2020 semester. Included is information on [24/7 Chat](#)

[Help](#), [Online Content](#), and [E-Resources](#). Be sure to visit this site regularly, as updates are being made on a continual basis.

**Student Resource Website.** In addition to websites developed for faculty, a [Learning Remotely](#) site has also been created to provide resources for our students. Included are links to [SUNY Resources for Distance Learning](#), and Tips for Success including the [SSC Time Management Guide](#). Please be sure to let your students know about these resources!

**S/U and Course Withdrawals.** While the official deadline for a student to withdraw from a course or to change their grading option is April 3<sup>rd</sup>, given the extraordinary circumstances this semester, we are asking that faculty and staff remain flexible to students' requests after this due date. We are also allowing students to opt to change their grades to S/U or to withdraw from courses, even if they currently have a hold or balance due. This change, for this semester only, makes the following assumptions:

- The student confirms that an S/U is an appropriate grade mode choice if the course is required in the major;
- The student's advisor has confirmed that the requested S/U is allowed in the student's program (i.e., does not affect programmatic requirements such as accreditation); and
- Any withdrawals will not negatively impact the student's financial aid or scholarships.

Questions about the late S/U or course withdrawal processes should be directed to the [Student Success Center](#) or the [Crane Dean's Office](#) (for Crane majors).

Students needing to request an Emergency Withdrawal from one, some, or all their Spring 2020 classes will need to contact the [Student Success Center](#) or the [Crane Dean's Office](#) (for Crane majors). Emergency Withdrawals can be requested up until the final day of the semester (May 15, 2020) and require a brief narrative describing their emergency situation. Students should be reminded to consider any possible implications on their financial aid if they do withdraw from any courses.

**Reminder: Assigned Course Times for Synchronous Instruction.** As a quick reminder, faculty who are using synchronous instruction must plan course meetings **at their regularly scheduled class time**. Meetings held off schedule could conflict with students' other scheduled course meetings. In addition, per ADA guidelines it is important to **video and archive** synchronous class meetings and make them available to students. This also ensures that all students, including those who are experiencing substantial connectivity challenges, will have access to course meetings.

**Student Technology or Access Issues.** As you begin offering your classes remotely, you may begin hearing from students with technology or access issues that are impacting their ability to successfully participate in your course and/or meet your course requirements. In order to address those issues in a timely manner, we ask that faculty submit an Alert through Navigate. Campus staff will be notified of the alert and will work with the student to resolve the issue.

Please do **not** submit an alert through Navigate solely because a student has not responded to your emails (instead see *Unresponsive Students*, below). This alert process is only for when a student has expressed a technology/access concern to you.

Please use the following steps to report a technology-related alert:

- Log into [Navigate](#) with your campus username and password
- Click “Issue an Alert” (right-side menu on home screen)
- Enter the student’s name
- Select “Distance Learning Challenges” from the list of reasons
- Select the class info
- Describe the issue in “Additional Comments” (Please be specific)
- Click Submit

The campus is also in the process of setting up a computer “lab” on campus for those students who are experiencing difficulty accessing technology in order to participate in their classes and/or complete their coursework. All social distancing guidelines will be enforced in setting up this lab. More information regarding hours and location(s) will be made available soon.

**Unresponsive Students.** Some faculty have reported that they have not been able to connect yet with all of their students via email regarding arrangements for instruction for the remainder of the semester. Faculty can text students who have not responded to their course outreach through Navigate. However, it is important to note the texting is only to be used for extraordinary circumstances. **Therefore, please do NOT send texts to students who have been responsive to your prior outreach!**

In order to contact unresponsive students, use the following steps:

1. Log into [Navigate](#) with your campus username and password
2. At the top of your home screen is a header saying **Staff Home**
3. Click the little black triangle next to that header to select your **Professor Home**
4. On your **Professor Home**, scroll down to view **Students In My Classes**
5. Select the unresponsive students from your list by clicking the box next to their name

6. From the **Actions** menu at the top of the list, select **Send Message**
7. This will open a dialog box; select the **Send Text** tab
8. Compose your message
9. Click the blue **Send Message** button

Please note that text messages will be sent from a generic number to the cell number the student has on file with the College. Students without a cell number in the system will have their text forwarded to their Potsdam Outlook email.

### **Let's Hear From You!**

Please send me your ideas on the following, to include in a future Special Edition of our Newsletter:

- Links to articles, websites, or other resources that you've found to be particularly helpful.
- New strategies that you have successfully implemented in your virtual classrooms.
- Ways in which you and your peers, and your students, have remained in touch during this difficult time of social distancing and self-isolation.
- Stories of success—what are you, and your students, doing to address this semester's unique challenges? What new and creative ideas would you like to share with our campus community?

*I look forward to hearing from you!*

**Course Evaluations.** Several faculty members, particularly those who do not yet have continuing appointment, have expressed questions and concerns regarding this semester's student opinion surveys. Specific questions about individual situations should be directed to the faculty member's dean. However, please know that the administration fully understands that this semester is unique, and that expectations will be very different in terms of the availability of surveys and course evaluations. Written narrative reflections on this semester's experiences, and how you have adapted to the challenge of teaching online and the lessons that have been learned by both you and your students, would be very appropriate to include in your dossiers, as would be reflections on conversations that you have with peer mentors as you've adapted to these new teaching practices. Your reflections on this experience, and not simply numeric survey scores, will be much more meaningful in this semester of rapid change.

In addition, we have been able to expedite our contract with EvaluationKit, an online course evaluation system, which we hope to have up and running at least on a pilot basis by the end of the semester. More to come soon!

**Advising & Academic Calendar Reminders.** Please note the following reminders and updates:

- As email is now our primary means of communication, and students will need to demonstrate advisor approval for things like overrides, faculty advisors are reminded to respond to override requests as quickly as possible.
- The advising and registration timeframe has been shifted one week due to the extension of spring break ([Remote Advising Information](#) and [Fall 2020 Registration Dates](#)).
- Student Outcome Tracking (SOT) will no longer be implemented for this round of registration. Training sessions originally scheduled for March have been cancelled.
- See the [Academic Internships](#) page to review options available to students that are unable to complete their required hours for their registered academic internship (on- or off-campus) for the Spring 2020 semester.
- There has been no change to the [Academic Calendar](#). The April break will occur as scheduled.

In addition, now that classes are back in session and advising is underway, you may be receiving questions from students about applying for an overload, getting a course override, or adding/changing their majors/minors. Guidance is provided on the [Advising & Registration](#) site.

**Counseling Resources.** The College Counseling Center remains available for students in need of mental health support. All staff are working from home using various video chat platforms to connect with students for tele-counseling. There are self-help resources on the campus' [COVID-19 website](#) for both campus employees and students.

If a student shares they are struggling for any reason, please email the Counseling staff directly or encourage the student to email the Center at [counseling@potsdam.edu](mailto:counseling@potsdam.edu). Counseling staff members are checking this constantly through the day and will work with students through email to set up an appointment. **This is NOT for crisis situations.**

If you have a student in crisis (at risk of taking own or someone else's life, unable to resist urges of severe self-harm, or are seeing, hearing or sensing things that are not there) call University Police (315-267-2222).

If you need support for your own mental health, please email *Gena Nelson* directly at [nelsongc@potsdam.edu](mailto:nelsongc@potsdam.edu). Our staff can do a one-time video meeting for support and advice.

Additional resources for employees and students:

- REACHOUT: 315-265-2422
- Trevor Project: 866-488-7386
- Crisis Text Line: TEXT HOME to 741741
- Tribal support: <https://www.mhanational.org/finding-help>
- Suicide hotlines: 1-800-SUICIDE (800-784-2433) OR 1-800-273-TALK (800-273-8255)

**iGen Book Chat.** This April's Book Chat, focusing on the text *iGen* by J. M. Twenge (<http://www.jeantwenge.com/>), will be offered virtually via Teams on **April 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup>** from 11-12:00noon. I do still have some hard copies of the book available— please let me know if you'd like a copy, and are interested in joining the conversation!