

From: [Office Account President](#) 

Date: April 28, 2020 at 12:32:22 PM Eastern Daylight Time

To: "ALLCAMPUS@LISTS.NCC.EDU" 

Subject: **Planning for Fall 2020 – Equity and Excellence**

Dear College community,

First, I hope everybody and their loved ones are safe and healthy. The Global Pandemic has impacted our students, faculty, staff and their families. Please accept my sincere best wishes to all who have been affected by COVID-19. I send hope for a speedy recovery to those who are currently ill. I offer my heartfelt sympathies, as well, to those who have lost someone due to this unforgiving virus.

The advent of this awful illness has upended our personal lives, studies, and professional careers and responsibilities at the College. Tuesday, March 10, 2020 was the last day we held “face to face” classes at the College and the last time many faculty and staff were on campus.

Despite many obstacles and the suddenness of the closure of our physical campus, almost 99% of the College’s Spring “face to face” course offerings have transitioned to remote instruction. Support services are now being offered remotely. Substantially, all other College operations are occurring from a distance through available technology. I am proud of the strength and perseverance of our students who have forged ahead with us, understanding that no one anticipated this situation at the beginning of the semester. The strength of their commitment has been an inspiration.

The continued opportunity for our students’ learning and support provided remotely is thanks to our faculty and staff, who have made the transition to distance learning possible. When faced with extreme adversity, faculty and staff demonstrated passion, compassion, and adaptability which are enviable and commendable. Equity and empathy came to the forefront and manifested in different ways, as faculty and staff put forward colossal efforts. We all are entitled to take a moment and to reflect on our accomplishments of the past several weeks.

Summer sessions are right around the corner. Summer 2020 courses listed in Banner as “face to face” will consist of remote instruction that will be conducted through the use of email and video platforms. Classes will meet remotely during the days and times listed in Banner, of course complying with departmental minimum qualifications. (There is no change to courses approved and listed as Distance Education courses. They will continue to run as usual, including the minimum qualifications for assignment purposes.)

Fall 2020 Contingency Planning

Looking forward to the upcoming Fall, we are planning four possible scenarios. While we hope for a miraculous retreat of the pandemic, allowing us to return to pre-COVID19 times, that is most unlikely. We are in conversation with the Executive team, NCCFT, AFA, CSEA, NCCAA and Governance Leaders, local and State government, medical professionals, and SUNY. We now plan for four different scenarios. While we hope for a return to “face to face” traditional instruction referred to in scenario 4, I believe it is certain that the Fall setting for students, faculty, and staff will require remote synchronous and asynchronous instruction and operations. Currently approved online experiences would continue as planned in all four scenarios outlined below. The four scenarios are:

1. All instruction, learning, and all other College operations will be remote.
2. Instruction, learning, and all other College operations will be “face to face” for limited situations (e.g., labs) and the majority of instruction, learning, and other College operations will be remote.
3. Instruction, learning, and all other College operations will begin as “face to face” and will transition to remote operations at some point during the semester.
4. Instruction, learning, and all other College operations will be traditionally delivered, “face to face”.

This contingency planning requires drastic changes to instruction, learning, and all other College operations. Three of the four possible scenarios require distance learning and remote College operations. In the world of remote instruction and College operations, what is excellence? What does it mean to

have excellence in equity, excellence in instruction, excellence in support services, excellence in operations? These are the questions we must now grapple with and answer, for our students and ourselves. The entire College community must be committed to advancing the delivery of instruction and support services remotely. We must all be prepared to provide high quality instruction, learning, support services, and other College operations from a distance. At my request, all Vice Presidents are working with their respective teams to ensure this occurs. We have engaged NCCFT and Academic Senate leadership in these conversations and planning.

Equity and Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and College Operations

Colleges and universities were provided leniency for instruction, learning, and other operations during the Spring and Summer 2020, because of the swiftness with which the pandemic was declared a national emergency. These special dispensations have been well documented by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education, Middle States Commission on Higher Education, The State Education Department/The University of the State of New York, and other entities. This leniency has created our new "normal" for distance instruction modalities and student learning, as well as for all other College operations (i.e., advising, student financial services, student life, procurement, etc.) that are now remote. Colleges and universities have several months to prepare for Fall 2020, and there is an expectation among many that the semester will be disrupted in some way, shape, or form due to the virus. Given the projections and advanced notice, I anticipate that remote learning will be required to become more robust than the emergency instructional program we were suddenly forced into by the virus just over one month ago. In preparation for Fall 2020, and to ensure that we are able to accomplish our mission and to pursue excellence, we must continue our current work and/or engage in learning how to accomplish our work differently in order to meet the following goals:

- as a faculty member, become fully proficient with remote learning modalities
- as non-classroom faculty and staff, become fully proficient with remote work modalities
- as a College, ensure equitable opportunities for access, completion, post-

completion success

- meet regional and programmatic accreditation standards
- guarantee transferrable courses and credits that count towards graduation at the receiving institution
- comply with professional and industry certifications and requirements
- provide students with essential support services such as academic advising and counseling
- adhere to compliance issues such as Financial Aid requirements
- ensure the basic needs of our students are met

In addition to the minimum qualifications for instruction in each department, Fall 2020 face-to-face courses that have to transition to remote instruction will be delivered using video conferencing (e.g., Blackboard, Collaborate, Zoom, or Skype) during the scheduled time listed on Banner, and all course materials and assessments (i.e., exams, quizzes, homework, etc.) have to be administered via Blackboard. As an illustration of collaboration and communication, I am thankful to have the support of the faculty regarding these tasks as voiced by the Academic Senate Executive Committee.

Given the four Fall 2020 scenarios presented above and our presumption that scenario four is unlikely, all faculty must be prepared for remote instruction. As offered previously, the College will continue to offer training opportunities.

In Conclusion

Presently, our students who are transitioning from high school will attend their first semester of college after having been out of their high school classrooms for approximately the last four months of their academic senior year. Transfer students will have just experienced an unprecedented semester. Non-traditional age returnees or those who are first-time in college students will be anxious to begin their journey on the path to achieve their educational goals. How will we ensure that their experience embodies the excellence that we want to provide? What will we do differently to ensure a successful transition to Nassau

Community College? How will we support them once they begin? How will instruction and learning approaches adapt to ensure that we continue to meet our mission?

We need to focus our shared efforts to address these questions in an equity-minded and data-guided approach to increasing access, completion, and post-completion success. Together, we can meet these challenges with an unabashed student-centered approach that creates opportunities reflective of the strength of our collective, Nassau Community College.

Following this letter, I have provided excerpts from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, The State Education Department/The University of the State of New York, and the United States Office of Post-Secondary Education regarding the mandate of distance learning.

With admiration and thanks,

Jermaine F. Williams

Jermaine F. Williams, Ed.D.
President
Nassau Community College
One Education Drive
Garden City, NY 11530

Email: Presidentsoffice@ncc.edu

Phone: (516) 572-7205

Facebook: @NassauPrez

Twitter: @NassauPrez

Instagram: @NassauPrez

SUPPORTIVE REFERENCES REGARDING THE ADVENT OF DISTANCE LEARNING

-
From a March 17th, 2020 Middle States Commission on Higher Education webinar. “On March 5, 2020, the United States Department of Education provided Guidance for interruptions of study related to Coronavirus (COVID-19), which you can find posted at our website and theirs. As soon as we received that

Guidance, the Executive Committee of our Commission temporarily waived the substantive change requirements for distance education and contractual agreements to align with the USDE Guidance. A communication was sent to all institutions on March 9, 2020, documenting our Commission's decisions and requesting an update from institutions that needed to adopt temporary distance education operations, entered into temporary agreements with other institutions, experienced an impact on the academic calendar, and/or established temporary sites for instruction. We asked for that report by April 1, 2020, to be sent to the institution's assigned MSCHE vice president liaison, signed by the Chief Executive Officer or Accreditation Liaison Officer."

THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, [Guidance for Colleges and Universities on Addressing the Needs of Students Impacted by the Coronavirus](#). Updated April 2, 2020.

"4/2/20 Update: The flexibility concerning offering courses/programs online that are not currently registered by NYSED in the distance education format is extended to the Summer 2020 term(s) and is extended to include new students, enrolling for the first time in the Summer 2020 term(s). Please note that offering programs in the distance education format (i.e., 50% or more of the requirements can be completed through study delivered by distance education) beyond the Summer 2020 term(s) will be subject to regular distance education approval requirements, including the submission of program registration applications to NYSED. The need to extend this flexibility beyond the Summer 2020 term(s) will be determined depending upon the COVID-19 emergency time frame. "

The following is [UPDATED Guidance for interruptions of study related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) from a 4.3.20 guidance from the Office of Postsecondary Education](#). Subject: Approval to Offer Distance Education.

"Because of the COVID-19 national emergency, and as an emergency measure to accommodate students, the Department provides broad approval to institutions to use distance learning modalities without going through the standard Department approval process, even if the institution would normally be required to seek Departmental approval for the use or expansion of distance learning programs. At this time, this flexibility applies only to payment periods that overlap with the Department's March 5, 2020, guidance or that begin on or between March 5 and June 1, 2020. If an institution chooses to continue offering a new program or using distance education in a manner requiring the Department's approval after that point, it may be required to obtain approval

under the Department's and its accrediting agency's applicable policies and procedures.

We also continue to permit accrediting agencies to waive their distance education review requirements; however, we encourage accreditors promptly to develop new policies and procedures for providing rapid approval of distance education programs for institutions working to accommodate students whose enrollment is otherwise interrupted as a result of COVID-19. Accrediting agencies should document the process by which their decision-making body decided to waive or provide expedited review of distance education programs. This flexibility is not available for clock-hour courses that lead to licensure if the licensing body will not accept distance learning courses or hours or give credit for them toward the number of hours a student must complete.

