



March 13, 2020

[Equity Minded Principles as Minnesota State Faculty Respond to COVID-19](#)

Equity Minded Principles for Alternative Instruction

Background

This is a working document and you are invited to add equity-minded principles per your discipline and/or general principles. Remember, institutions have the freedom to use “alternative instruction” modalities, which means online is one of those modes, including modes such as correspondence learning and staggered synchronous learning. Faculty within their programs will determine which modes best match their learner needs.

Directions:

Please add your name and institutions so we can transparently share and credit ideas. See examples below and add your own.

Flexibility

- Honor student economic precarity. As 60 percent of our students work to support their education, they will experience work disruptions and will have to pick up shifts as necessary. Consider adjusting a deadline for students whose livelihoods are already stressed. (Terrence Wilcox, Biology, Lake Superior College)
- Recognize that students may be tending to many things at home during this time: children home from school, sick family members, limited access to technology. When possible, limit the expectation for synchronous meetings; it just may not be possible for students to make that work. (Kimberly Johnson, South Central College)

Technology

- Give access. Zoom is a free (for faculty and students) web conferencing tool that allows you record your videos and automatically transcribes them for closed captioning audiences. (Harold Torrence, Business Management, DCTC)

- Students can also call in to a zoom meeting if they do not have access to video. This is an opportunity to reimagine how we build strong and trustworthy virtual communities. (Catrina Huynh-Weiss, E & I, Minneapolis College)
- Be aware that many of our students use their phones for ALL the work they do for school (that's the only internet they have access to outside of school). Here's a good article that gives tips for how to make sure your d2L is mobile-friendly: "[D2L Design Considerations for Mobile Devices](#)" Many students also rely on Pulse—so make sure that you include any assignment, quiz, discussion due dates in the d2L calendar. You can usually check a box to include due dates in a calendar when you are setting up due dates for your assignments and quizzes, or you can check off ALL the dates you want to include in the d2L calendar at once by going to: Your courses' D2L=>Course Admin=>Manage Dates--the calendar column is to the far right—you can click the items you want to appear in the calendar (and on student's phones!) (Rebecca March, Librarian and Information Studies faculty—Minneapolis College)
- Wondering about options for student that have limited access to internet? Is it feasible to mail them physical copies of work to be done? We could include a stamped return envelope for them to send it back? Is this not do-able? I think it would be do-able for my classes. (Rebecca March)
- Consider creating an online survey on D2L (possibly for credit) where students can let you know what technology they have access to and feel comfortable using. This may allow you to assess where students are at and help students who are feeling especially anxious about the change to online. (Mo Janzen, Anoka Ramsey)
 - Lisa Bergin has created the following d2l friendly basic needs assessment survey faculty can modify and use right away. The S.O. uploaded it to the Academic Continuity Teams Site which any faculty can access or join—go to [Ford, Catherine L: D2L Survey of Students Basic Needs](#) (RCK)

Virtual Office Hours

- Online office hours via Zoom, with real-time whiteboard collaboration: If you have a touchscreen device (or a mouse works, too) and want to collaborate on the same blank page, akin to a piece of paper, during online office hours, I've created a tutorial video for this! This would be particularly helpful for courses where you and your students work together on the same sheet of paper during office hours, or for online tutoring. [Collaborate using the whiteboard feature of Zoom](#) (Maran Wolston, MCTC)

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Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

- Give space/time for students to share how they are doing emotionally and physically. Support each other by listening and offering any resources we can. (Lisa Bergin, Philosophy, Minneapolis College).
- Think from the perspective of the most vulnerable students in your class (taking care of sick families, sick themselves, without health insurance, work disruptions, without internet at home, etc.). How can you shift so that these students can find success in the course? If the most vulnerable can make it through, then everyone can make it through. Likely this will mean:
 - A lot of flexibility with deadlines and with how students can show their learning.
 - Multiple ways for them to reach you and for you to communicate information to them.
 - Keep things as simple as possible. (LB)
- Ask students what they need from you to support their continued engagement in the course. Get ideas from them often and make the changes you can. (LB)
- We cannot learn when we are stressed out, so offer yourself and your students the techniques you use to stay relaxed and focused, ready to learn. Solicit techniques from students and share with the whole class. (LB)
- Give a couple pathways for successfully completing the course, allow students the option of suggesting their own pathway. (LB)
- If students can only think about the pandemic, find ways to channel this into the learning in the course. If students need a break from thinking about the pandemic, allow them that as well. (LB)
- As much as you are able, make the learning communal. (LB)
- Know that none of us who are teaching face-to-face have the capacity to do justice to ourselves, our students, our disciplines in making a switch to online on such a short time frame. Let your students know that your intention is not to harm them in the process and ask them to let you know what isn't working. Give them academic credit for the collaborative work you will be doing together to figure out how to make this shift. (LB)
- If you're a fun teacher IN class, be a fun teacher ONLINE, too—post videos about things going on in the world that DON'T have to do with COVID-19. I talk about current events, music, movies, etc. in my classes—I plan to post links to those things, tell students the Netflix shows my family is binge-watching, music we are listening to, etc. Encourage students to do the same. Maybe start a forum or two in D2L discussions for students to discuss “life” things. (Rebecca March)

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Course Design and Assessments

- For online testing, based on research, I highly recommend weekly exams with a few cumulative questions on each exam. This will increase learning and decrease cheating, plus it will spread out your work. For example, if your exams are usually 100 points, then have weekly 25-point exams. Practice quizzes (with unlimited attempts) is another way to increase learning, engage students, and assign points), and you could teach content through quiz questions. The good news is that research shows that 3 options on multiple-choice exams are most effective...both for students and for instructors writing questions, so that can save you some time, too. I also recommend then dropping lowest scores to provide more flexibility for students whose lives are disrupted by these events. (Cheryl Neudauer, Biology, Minneapolis College)
 - Here is more on how to reduce cheating on d2l (RCK)
<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Using-Brightspace-to-Stop-Cheating>
- For assignments in your courses, think about using tools like D2L Brightspace Communications/Discussions and having students find and/or create resources to share with one another. This can serve many purposes including increasing diverse perspectives and decreasing your workload. Allowing for creation of materials in any format can highlight student strengths and is aligned with culturally-responsive teaching. Having students create exam questions can create practice questions for other students and create exam questions you can use (plus writing questions can be an effective study strategy and help develop independent learners). You could create simple grading criteria outlining the requirements for posting and the requirements for reply to the posts of other students. Discussions can also be set up so students can rate them, and you can use this to find the best resources to use in the future. (Cheryl Neudauer, Minneapolis College)
- Teaching through COVID-19 is a unique opportunity to not only teaching our content but also provide a public service to help spread credible information and link to social responsibility/civic engagement and information literacy student-learning outcomes. I have overheard many conversations lately full of misinformation (e.g., "We don't have any good bacteria living on our hands." Or "I heard people with more skin pigment are protected from the virus."). Think about how your discipline relates to the pandemic and try to use that in your teaching (Cheryl Neudauer, Minneapolis College)
- Recognize that you may not be able to teach everything you thought you were going to teach now that you have lost two weeks of the semester. Rather than trying to do everything and overwhelm yourself and your students, decide what is essential for your

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students to learn. I mean, essential: review your learning outcomes and ask yourself: Do I really need this assignment? Do we really need to do this project this way? (Kimberly Johnson, South Central College)

- From Lisa Bergin – some ideas for shifting away from pen and paper exams:
 - As we compassionately find pathways for our students who, if not already vulnerable, will very likely be more vulnerable now, we might be rethinking how to assess students’ mastery of our course learning outcomes now that in person, timed exams are no longer feasible. One option would be to shift from in-person, timed exams to remote, open (text, time, materials) assessments. The below suggestions align with Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Poverty Responsive Pedagogy, and Open Educational Pedagogy, as well as what we know about the impossibility to perform at our best when we are under stress. Lisa Bergin has given examples of how she’s done this after seeing her colleagues shifting away from pen and paper exams; uncountable thanks to Maran Wolston, Ruthanne Crapo Kim, Matthew Palombo for helping her along her journey.
 - Have students to link the course material to their own lives
 - i. Why: we learn by integrating the new to the known
 - ii. Example: In a logic class, create an argument about something that you are currently thinking about and assess your argument using the tools you’ve learned in the course
 - Have students to build material for the course
 - i. Why: many, many of our students are creative and would love to use their skills, and they know best what students need to be successful in the course
 - ii. Examples: student created practice problems and answers, exam questions and answers, creative explanations of challenging concepts (with visuals, cartoons, dance-moves, music, videos)
 - Have students build questions for an exam/assessment
 - i. Why: students as co-creators of knowledge is a higher-level learning
 - Build an oral assessment that can be done over the phone
 - i. Why: for many of our students, oral skills are their strongest skills
 - ii. Example: Use an oral dialogue. For inspirations: “A Story of Honor” by Lamont & Palombo in *Out from the Shadows* (5 pg)
 - Give students a couple of options for showing their skills
 - Give students the option of co-creating with you their own option for demonstrating their skills

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- Individualize assessments (maybe you can't do an oral assessment with every student in your course, but you might be able to do so for the students who do not have access to computers/wi-fi)

Those of us who have used the above have found that they bring out students higher-level learning skills, allow students to shine, and lead to profound grading experiences.

Oral Culture Inclusion

- Reduce reliance on written culture online platforms. Embed oral videos to introduce key ideas. Allow students to upload a Zoom video discussing a reading instead of posting a written discussion. Ensure all videos or voice recording as accessible using closed captioning software (Zoom can transcribe but it must be checked) or use videos already captioned. (Ruthanne Crapo Kim, Philosophy, Minneapolis College)

Additional Support from the System Office

To support those on your campus who are working to develop alternate delivery modes using academic technologies available for no additional cost through Minnesota State (D2L Brightspace, Kaltura MediaSpace, Zoom, Office 365), we want to offer these system office resources to you and your campuses.

Visit the [Events Calendar](#) to access these resources.

- **Quick Start Guides** - This [Quick Start Guide](#) provides some how-to videos and step-by-step instructions to help instructors perform some common tasks as they explore alternate modes of delivery. We'll be updating references and links throughout the week.
- **Drop in Sessions** – A team of staff members from Minnesota State have scheduled [Drop-In Sessions via Zoom](#) to assist any faculty who may need assistance using the available educational technologies to which our community has access. A full schedule of these drop-in sessions is available on the calendar, but generally we'll have staff available each weekday from 9-11am, 1-3pm, and 7-9pm. We will be reviewing these times and adjusting as possible, based on demand.
- **One-on-One Sessions** - If you require one-on-one assistance with a staff member, please use this electronic tool to [reserve time with a staff member](#) to work one-on-one via web conference (Zoom).

Finally, for the community of staff and faculty across the system who are seeking resources to assist instructors with academic continuity and alternative deliveries, we will be using the [SO-Academic-Continuity-Team Team Site](#) to share resources, ideas, questions etc. with any staff member or faculty peer mentor who wishes to join.

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