

## Continuity of Academic Instruction for a Pandemic or Emergency

Should Mayville State University experience a pandemic or emergency situation that threatens to disrupt our instructional mission, we need to be prepared to respond. The MSU Cabinet would make the determination if a temporary suspension of classes or early ending of the semester is necessary and would notify the campus by the emergency notification system and conventional communication systems.

We can't predict every possible scenario but we can establish basic steps, use common sense and good judgment to deal with the unexpected. This should reduce uncertainty and anxiety among students and faculty.

We need to be prepared for higher than normal student absenteeism. Worst-case pandemic situations, which would be highly unlikely but need to be considered, to order a mid-semester temporary suspension of classes to mitigate the spread of (example) influenza, or an early ending to the semester if social distancing is mandated by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or state/local health authorities.

Absenteeism can be as high as 30-40% during the peak of a pandemic. A question might arise as to the legitimacy of notifications of illness, particularly when health care providers are unlikely to provide written excuses (because people with symptoms of flu-like illness are generally being advised to avoid seeking health-care unless there are complicating factors).

It is important for you to take some specific steps so that you consider what you and your students need to know and do if MSU should be faced with a pandemic or emergency that affects the campus. MSU will need everyone's support if we are to meet our goal of maintaining continuity and quality of academic instruction, as well as student progress towards degree completion during a campus emergency.

The information below provides several strategies that will help you get started on your individual Continuity of Instruction planning. Timely implementation is highly recommended.

- 1. Amend your syllabus and/or post in the learning management system (LMS) by adding a statement, that a university-wide emergency, such as a pandemic, may necessitate changes in the posted course structure. (MSU's LMS is Moodle)**

The addition to your syllabus alerts students to the possibility that their instructor may need to adjust course requirements or grading strategies in response to an emergency.

Statement: "In the event of a major campus emergency resulting in temporary suspension of classes or early ending to the semester; the course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages on the official syllabus are subject to change. I will notify you of such changes by email and/or by the campus learning management system (LMS) currently Moodle."

Since MSU provides all faculty with Tablet PCs, faculty have the capability to access campus email, the LMS and NDUS Campus Connection while on-campus and off-campus. The official class roster is in Campus Connection and final grades are assigned using this application. MSU's official method of communication is by email. The protocol may need to be clarified with students that they have a responsibility to inform you, the instructor when they become sick. Faculty have access to training if you are not familiar with these applications. It is your obligation to understand and have basic knowledge of these applications and use them as an instructional tool. MSU students have an obligation to use email, the LMS and Campus Connection for correspondence, course participation and student access to their academic record.

**2. All MSU courses have a LMS presence, which is ready for all faculty and students to use and may be essential to use during an emergency.**

The LMS allows instructors to load materials (readings, lecture notes, slides, assignments, exams) in advance and hold their release until a specific date. Should classes be suspended, the LMS will help you communicate with your students until classes resume. There is an obligation for all MSU faculty to have a basic understanding and use of the LMS as an instructional tool. If you need additional training or just a refresher, MSU Instructional Technologists are available to assist you.

**3. Examine your course attendance and “make-up” policies.**

In the event of a health emergency, it is in everyone's best interest that sick students not attend class. In addition, if there were a severe pandemic outbreak in which serious illness and mortality rates were higher than normal, individual students may have significant family responsibilities. For these reasons, we advise that you review your attendance and "make-up" policies and consider possible alternatives. Having a backup plan for use in an emergency will increase your flexibility and your ability to help students complete the semester. The LMS will allow you to conduct classes to students who are capable of attending class while providing instruction and materials to sick students. If a campus closure is necessary due to a pandemic or emergency, the LMS and email will allow faculty to continue with instruction to allow a continuity of instruction.

**4. Back up critical grading records.**

The LMS grade book and Excel spreadsheets may become unavailable under some emergency suspension situations. For peace of mind, instructors may want to have grades backed up somewhere secure and off-line. Consider a flash drive or spreadsheet printout. Keep FERPA requirements in mind, being sure the backup is kept secure so student privacy rights are not violated.

**5. Be prepared to work from home.**

In some emergency situations, university operations could be disrupted to the point of closing down campus office buildings. In the event that Mayville State or the North Dakota University System responds to a pandemic or emergency with an emergency closure, or if you yourself become sick, you may find it necessary to do more work from home. Consider making preparations that would enable you to work from home through an internet connection. It is also a good practice to have instructional materials ready to take home on short notice. Since all faculty and students have Tablet PCs, these materials can be stored on the Tablet PC and/or a flash drive. The LMS allows you to store your course materials and release them when appropriate. Also, the user features within the LMS and email will facilitate the transfer of course materials and the continuance of instruction.

**Adopted: Fall, 2009**

**Sponsor: President's Cabinet**