January 7, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome back to Spring 2021 on the Hilltop! Faculty syllabi are an effective way to demonstrate our support for new and returning students. As you finalize your syllabi for this academic term, please communicate the required information below to your students. Sharing this information in writing will create a record that you have outlined the accommodations provided for by University policy. This also provides students with a reminder not only of the policies themselves, but also of how to access the services and accommodations available.

Also, please make sure your syllabi are uploaded to https://sites.smu.edu/des/syllabus/. (The Syllabus Library is a resource for SMU faculty, staff, and students, and can only be accessed with an SMU ID and password.) These policies provide expectations for both faculty and students. Faculty who do not follow University policy need to provide their Department/Division Chair with a written explanation.

(Note: Please do not copy the old Disability Accommodations statement from a previous syllabus but copy/paste the paragraph below as is. Exception: Law school faculty members should consult with Stephen Yeager, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, for the specific statement appropriate for law syllabi.)

- **Disability Accommodations**: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit http://www.smu.edu/Provost/SASP/DASS to begin the process. Once approved and registered, students will submit a DASS Accommodation letter to faculty through the electronic portal DASS Link and then communicate directly with each instructor to make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

- **Religious Observance**: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence.
Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (See 2020-2021 SMU Undergraduate Catalog under “Enrollment and Academic Records/Enrollment Policies/Excused Absences.”)

Student Learning Outcomes: Please include in your syllabi all student learning outcomes, both those specific to your course, as well as those that satisfy major and general education requirements.

Student Academic Success Programs: Students needing assistance with writing assignments for SMU courses may schedule an appointment with the Writing Center through Canvas. Students wanting support with subject-specific tutoring or success strategies should contact SASP, Loyd All Sports Center, Suite 202; 214-768-3648; https://www.smu.edu/sasp.

Final Exams: Final course examinations shall be given in all courses where they are appropriate, and some form of final assessment is essential. Final exams or final assessments must be administered as specified in the official examination schedule, and shall not be administered during the last week of classes or during the Reading Period. Faculty must state clearly in the syllabus the date/time and form of the final exam or assessment. All exams, tests, and quizzes will be delivered online this spring so that all students, regardless of mode of instruction, have equitable access to testing.

Caring Community Connections (CCC) program: This is a resource for anyone in the SMU community to refer students of concern to the Office of the Dean of Students. Faculty play a critical role in identifying students who are experiencing challenges, as you may be the first to notice a change in behavior such as class attendance or performance. The online referral form can be found at smu.edu/deanofstudentsccc. After a referral is submitted, students will be contacted to discuss the concern, strategize options, and be connected to appropriate resources. Additionally, should you have concerns about students and are unclear about what to do, please see the CCC Reference Guide, or contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 214-768-4564.

Recommended Syllabus Statement for Pregnant and Parenting Students: Accommodations for pregnant and parenting students: Under Title IX students who are pregnant or parenting may request academic adjustments by contacting Elsie Johnson (elsiej@smu.edu) in the Office of the Dean of Students, or by calling 214-768-4564. Students seeking assistance must schedule an appointment with their professors as
early as possible, present a letter from the Office of the Dean of Students, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that academic adjustments are not retroactive and, when feasible, require advance notice to implement.

- **Covid-19 Attendance Statement:** Students who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or who have been notified through contact tracing of potential exposure and need to self-quarantine or isolate must follow the protocols laid out in SMU's Contact Tracing Protocol. To ensure academic continuity, students in these situations will not be penalized and will be provided appropriate modifications to assignments, deadlines, and testing. Please also note that SMUFlex classes might, in rare circumstances, go remote for two week periods to accommodate COVID-related issues. To ensure these necessary accommodations, affected students must:
  
  o Provide as much advance notification as possible to the instructor about a change in circumstances. Students must notify their instructor about a potential absence as well as plans for a return to class. For cases in which students test positive for COVID-19, they should fill out a [CCC form at this link](#).
  
  o Communicate promptly with the instructor to establish, as necessary, alternative assignments and/or changes to deadlines and exams. Students are then responsible for meeting the expectations laid out in these alternative arrangements.
  
  o Continue participation in class via Zoom, as health circumstances permit. Attend class regularly, when not in a situation outlined above, in accordance with safety measures laid out by SMU CAN in the Pledge to Protect (including wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, and cleaning personal space after class). In-person participation in SMUFlex classes is required on students’ assigned red/blue rotation days except in cases when students are experiencing illness, are in self-quarantine or in isolation.
  
  o Students facing multiple or extended COVID-19-related absences or illness can work with the Office of the Dean of Students to consider options such as fully remote learning or medical withdrawal.

This policy, aligned with the [SMU Honor Code](#) and the [SMU Pledge to Protect](#) relies on mutual trust and respect between students and faculty to ensure safety, academic integrity, and instructional continuity.

- **Sexual Harassment:** All forms of sexual harassment including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking are violations of SMU’s Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy and may also violate Texas law. Students who wish to file a complaint or receive more information about the grievance process may contact Samantha Thomas, SMU’s Title IX Coordinator, at accessequity@smu.edu or 214-768-3601. Please note that faculty are mandatory reporters. If students notify faculty of sexual harassment, they must report it to the Title IX Coordinator. For more information about sexual harassment
including resources available to assist students, please visit www.smu.edu/sexualmisconduct.

In the attached, I have also provided additional recommendations and resources that should improve the classroom experience for you and your students if helpful to you, such as the different attendance options that the academic leadership team developed at the end of the fall term. Additionally, you may wish to share the attached “2021 Know What to Do” and the “DASS informational sheet” with your students.

You may also choose to include the following statement regarding the “campus carry” law: “In accordance with Texas Senate Bill 11, also known as the “campus carry” law, following consultation with entire University community SMU determined to remain a weapons-free campus. Specifically, SMU prohibits possession of weapons (either openly or in a concealed manner) on campus. For more information, please see: http://www.smu.edu/BusinessFinance/Police/Weapons_Policy.”

Thank you for your help in promoting a great start to the spring 2021 semester. A copy of this letter and the attachments will be posted on the Office of the Provost website under “Provost’s Communications.”

Sincerely,

Elizabeth G. Loboa
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Southern Methodist University
P.O. Box 750221, Dallas, TX 75275-0221
e globoa@smu.edu
214-768-3219

SMU
Spring 2021
COVID-19 Health Statement on Attendance

Students who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or who have been notified through contact tracing of potential exposure and need to self-quarantine or isolate must follow the protocols laid out SMU’s Contact Tracing Protocol. To ensure academic continuity, students in these situations will not be penalized and will be provided appropriate modifications to assignments, deadlines, and testing. Please also note that SMUFlex classes might, in rare circumstances, go remote for two-week periods to accommodate COVID-related issues.

To ensure these necessary accommodations, affected students must:

- Provide as much advance notification as possible to the instructor about a change in circumstances. Students are not required to disclose health details, but must notify their instructor about a potential absence as well as plans for a return to class. For cases in which students test positive for COVID-19, they should fill out a CCC form at this link. The instructor will be notified in order to provide accommodations that ensure the student’s continuity in the course.
- Communicate promptly with the instructor to establish, as necessary, alternative assignments and/or changes to deadlines and exams. Students are then responsible for meeting the expectations laid out in these alternative arrangements.
- Continue participation in class via Zoom, as health circumstances permit. Attend class regularly, when not in a situation outlined above, in accordance with safety measures laid out by SMU CAN in the Pledge to Protect (including wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, and cleaning personal space after class). In-person participation in SMUFlex classes is required on students’ assigned red/blue rotation days except in cases when students are experiencing illness, are in self-quarantine or in isolation.
- Students facing multiple or extended COVID-19-related absences or illness can work with the Office of the Dean of Students to consider options such as fully remote learning or medical withdrawal.

This policy, aligned with the SMU Honor Code and the SMU Pledge to Protect, relies on mutual trust and respect between students and faculty to ensure safety, academic integrity, and instructional continuity.

The table below lays out additional attendance expectations that faculty can choose to include or not, based on their discretion and pedagogical approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Background (based on faculty feedback from the fall)</th>
<th>Syllabus language</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation grades</td>
<td>Some faculty have concerns about in-person attendance requirements during a pandemic. Many faculty have, however, found that participation grades can reflect the expectations in the attendance policy above (e.g., “provide advance notification,” “communicate promptly,” “in-person attendance is required except in cases. . .”).</td>
<td>Participation grades. Students will receive up to “x%” of their grades for participation, which includes the following: providing prompt communication about absences, meeting the expectations laid out for agreed-upon alternative arrangements, following class participation expectations, making up missing work, and providing acceptable forms of documentation for absences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Some faculty have asked what types of documentation they can require. The language to the right clarifies the COVID-related documentation. All other forms of documentation would remain the same as in other semesters (e.g., SMU excused absences related to Excused absences related to COVID-19 include either a) an email notification sent directly to the instructor that a student is in isolation, or b) an email from the Office of Dean of Students that a student is in quarantine. In the latter case for quarantine, acceptable forms of documentation.</td>
<td>Acceptable forms of documentation. Excused absences related to COVID-19 include either a) an email notification sent directly to the instructor that a student is in isolation, or b) an email from the Office of Dean of Students that a student is in quarantine. In the latter case for quarantine,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spring 2021</strong>&lt;br&gt;COVID-19 Health Statement on Attendance</td>
<td><strong>religious events, athletics, etc. and/or medical-related documentation).</strong></td>
<td><strong>the email comes directly from the Office of Dean of Students to the student, who can then forward it to the instructor. Students who have self-selected to go into quarantine or isolation must follow SMU protocol and fill out a CCC form, which will generate the above documentation.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zoom camera expectations</strong></td>
<td>Faculty can set their own expectations about Zoom cameras (camera on/off; camera expectations tied/not tied to participation grades, etc.) If faculty choose to enforce expectations as part of a participation grade, the expectations must be in the syllabus. Expectations can be stated and not tied to participation grades, but enforcement of the expectations could be challenging, based on fall experiences.</td>
<td><strong>Zoom camera expectations:</strong> For virtual class attendance, cameras should be turned on with faces clearly in view. If students are not clearly in view on the screen when attending via Zoom, they will be counted absent, and the participation grade will be impacted. If students have a technological issue that complicates participation, or if there is a specific reason to have the camera off, students must notify the instructor as soon as these issues occur to develop an alternative arrangement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Recordings** | Some faculty prefer to have all classes record automatically and upload to Panopto/Canvas. Other faculty would prefer to make the recordings available on an as-requested basis, per the stipulations in the SMU guidelines (see box to the right). This decision is at the faculty’s discretion. A change from the fall to the spring semester, however, is a requirement that recordings, whether automatically made available or provided only under the following conditions, must be made available within 48 hours of class. | **Access to recordings.** Per SMU requirements, recordings of synchronous classes will be made available as accommodations in the following situations: a) when students must be absent due to COVID-related issues, b) when international students live in time zones that make synchronous participation challenging, and c) when students experience bandwidth or other technology-related issues that could impede access to class. Students in these situations must request the recording in a timely manner.  

[Optional addition: In this class, students must make the request within [x] hours of missing class for the above reasons. If students have a compelling reason for not being able to make such a timely request, they must provide an explanation in writing.] |
| **Uncounted unexcused absence days** | Some faculty have suggested providing students with some “uncounted unexcused absence days,” which would help alleviate some of the anticipated stress of the spring semester with no formal breaks. | **Uncounted unexcused absence days.** Students can take up to [x] classes as uncounted unexcused absence days, in which they are not required to provide documentation for their absence, nor will the absence count against the participation grade. Such days recognize that people have extenuating circumstances that do not fall into the range of conventional excused absences. Students should notify the instructor when they are taking an uncounted
| Scheduled office hour/conference days/reading days | Some faculty prefer not to have students determine which days will be uncounted unexcused absences to make sure that students do not miss crucial class material, but they recognize the need for students to have opportunities for mental health breaks in a semester with no spring break. They have suggested scheduling a few class periods (up to 3 contact hours) as optional, additional office hours, conference or reading days, particularly at points when the semester might be especially demanding. | Scheduled office hour/conference days/reading days. Students will find on the weekly syllabus a number of scheduled class sessions when we will not meet as a group, but when I will instead offer additional, optional office hours for student-instructor conferences or I will schedule reading days to allow students catch up or get ahead with coursework. |
| Additional in-person attendance | Some faculty have expressed interest in formally inviting students to attend in person on all class days, including days of the opposite color assignment. This approach is a good option for many students, if the following two caveats are in place: a) the number of students can never exceed the classroom capacity as posted on my.smu.edu, which reflects the official socially distanced room capacity and b) students cannot be required to attend on their non-assigned color days because their schedules might make this option challenging. | Additional in-person attendance. Students who wish to do so are welcome to attend in person on both the red and blue rotation days, as long as the official classroom capacity for social distancing is observed. This maximum number can be found in my.smu.edu. |
| Studios and labs | Some faculty who teach labs or studio classes requested specific parameters that would pertain to their unique disciplinary areas. As with the other domains, this is optional to include or not based on faculty preference. | Studios/labs. This hands-on lab/studio course requires participation that cannot be done in a Remote setting due to the specialized equipment needed. If students have to miss a lab for a valid reason, they can still earn credit, but only for [x] out of the [x] studios/labs. Students can earn the participation points by [insert here] using the attached guidelines. Students will also be required to know the information missed for the exams. All missed lab excuses will be considered invalid until you provide written documentation that your absence was a valid excuse (see documentation above). |
Here are 10 practical suggestions for course design changes that can have a big impact. We encourage you to implement these to help all of our students.

1. **One-word Reaction**
   At the start of the semester, ask students how they feel about the course in one word. Students might respond with “anxious” or “scared.” This can signal your students may need some additional support. You can also use this tip at the beginning of a new week. Follow up on student concerns and assure them that you are on their team.

2. **Communicate Expectations**
   Communicate expectations about the course early and often. Uncertainty about what is required or how activities will be evaluated can cause undue anxiety. Refine activity instructions and nudges so students know how they will be graded.

3. **Break Down Big Projects**
   Instead of a big deliverable, break down a large assignment into smaller deliverables throughout the term. This scaffolding can help minimize procrastination, anxiety, and provide more opportunities for feedback for improvement.

4. **Limit Busywork**
   Adding assignments “just to check if students are doing the work” creates additional burden on you and your students. Consider optional or ungraded checkpoint activities that can help check for understanding.

5. **Estimate Time**
   Estimate how long each required activity or assignment will take students. We recommend posting the times in Canvas to help students manage their workload.
   Calculating time estimates can also help to make sure you are assigning appropriate levels of work and the work is relatively even throughout the term.

6. **Give Study Guides**
   Create and share study guides for your students for major exams and assessments.
   The primary advantage of a study guide is that it outlines what students need to review for an exam in a reduced form. Examples include summary sheets, graphic overviews, and guiding questions.

7. **Encourage Study Groups**
   Connections are particularly important now. Encourage your students to connect with one another and create study groups.
   You can facilitate this through Canvas to help students share interests, availability, and contact info.

8. **Check-in with Students**
   Create regular check-in check-ups by asking students about non-subject matter related topics. You can ask them to share their current favorite song or food, or other tidbits.
   Also, make a point to touch base with students that might not be participating actively in class (sync or async).

9. **Be Flexible and Understanding**
   While you will need due dates and clear expectations, students are going through a lot right now and they may need some grace. Encourage open communication and ask students to contact you if they are struggling with class.
   Ask for feedback from students early and be open to updating the course to work best for your students.

10. **Know Who Can Help**
    When you see students that are struggling, these campus resources are available:
    - Campus Community Connections
    - Dr. Bob Smith Health Center Counseling Services
    - Family Community Centers

For any questions about implementing these strategies, contact us at teaching.aid@smu.edu.
GET INFORMATION & KNOW WHAT TO DO DURING AN EMERGENCY

• Ensure you will receive SMU emergency notifications: Update your cell phone # in My.SMU.edu
• During an emergency, look for information updates through texts, www.smu.edu, Twitter (@SMU), or Facebook.
• View safety videos at www.smu.edu/emergency

LOCKDOWN
Run, Hide, or Fight

WHEN
You will receive this notice if there is an intruder with a weapon or the threat of another type of violence on campus.

ACTIONS (Depending on your personal situation and location)
• RUN – go to a safer location, if that is an option
• HIDE – get out of sight, remain quiet; lock doors when possible
• FIGHT – confronted with the violence, collaborate with others to distract the intruder and get away or defend yourselves
• Warn others and call 214-768-3333 if you have information for Police
• Wait for campus officials to notify you when to return to normal activities

SEEK SHELTER
Find a safe place in a building

WHEN
Outdoor warning sirens sound to signal there is severe weather or environmental danger outside

ACTIONS
• Go Inside a building, to bathrooms or interior halls, away from glass doors and windows
• Monitor one or more media sources
• Wait for campus officials to notify you when to return to normal activities

EVACUATE
Leave your building immediately

WHEN
Indoor alarms sound or strobe lights flash to signal there is a danger inside or near the building, such as fire

ACTIONS
• Go Outside the building; assist those who are disabled
• Take valuables and cell phone with you
• Proceed to the assembly area outside
• Wait for campus officials to notify you when to return to normal activities.
Additional Recommendations

**Early and Midterm Progress Reports and Grading**: Faculty are encouraged to have quizzes, tests or other forms of assessment throughout the semester. The official midterm grade is due Week 11 of classes, but it is recommended that students be assessed by Week 6 or 7 so they may make adjustments. Throughout the semester, you will receive Progress Reports for a variety of student populations (ex: 1st year students, student athletes, students on probation). The requests include links to provide information that advisors and students use to identify courses in which the student is academically at-risk. It is particularly important for you to report a student with a midterm grade of C- or below.

- **Course Grades**: In your syllabus, please inform students about how final course grades will be determined, including information pertinent to your grading decision, such as class participation.

- **Office Hours**: Faculty are expected to have designated office hours. Please state your office hours in the syllabus.

- **Academic Misconduct**: Academic misconduct of any kind is prohibited by the SMU Student Honor Code. Faculty who suspect plagiarism or cheating should consult [http://smu.edu/honorcouncil/](http://smu.edu/honorcouncil/) for appropriate actions and options.

- **Syllabus Repository**: After you have finalized your syllabus please upload a digital copy to the SMU syllabus repository ([https://sites.smu.edu/des/syllabus/](https://sites.smu.edu/des/syllabus/)) which can only be accessed by members of the SMU community.
DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS & SUCCESS STRATEGIES

WHAT WE DO

DASS coordinates the provision of classroom accommodations and disability access on campus. As part of the Student Academic Success Programs (SASP), DASS operates under the University Provost’s office. The DASS team:

- reviews documentation to determine eligibility for services
- creates accommodation letters for students to share with faculty or departmental representative
- facilitates test proctoring services when faculty are unable to provide this
- offers disability awareness training for campus departments
- provides academic coaching for students with learning differences
- refers students to on and off-campus support

Please review our website for more details, and read our faculty newsletter, the DASS Insider, which comes out by email twice a semester and can be found on our website.

WHERE WE ARE

Office and Student Support

The DASS team is located within the Altshuler Learning Enhancement Center (LEC) at:

202 Loyd Ctr. or 5800 Ownby Dr.

Entrance to our building is adjacent to Gate 3 of Ford Stadium. Take the elevator to the 2nd floor. Parking for faculty/staff is behind and under the Meadows Museum.

Test Proctoring Services

We strongly encourage students and faculty members to work out test accommodations within the department. For Spr 2021 computer-based tests, please consult DASS or OIT to determine the most efficient method to utilize technology to proctor/monitor your students. In the event that a faculty member is not able to provide the accommodations, DASS serves as a back-up (at a cost to the University). Our administrative assistant coordinates this process with faculty and students. Please contact our office for more details, or review the information on our website under “Test Proctoring.”

Exception: Students in Dedman School of Law should contact Dean Yeager.

WHO WE ARE

Director: Alexa Taylor
Learning Specialist: David Tylicki
Accommodations Coordinators: Michelle Bufkin, Karen Turbeville, Tomasine Sam
Administrative Support: Candy Brown

*The DASS office utilizes an online database system, called DASS Link, for all accommodation files, letters of accommodation as well as scheduled test proctoring held at the DASS office. Faculty log in at:

https://shibboleth-smu-accommodate.symplicity.com/sso/faculty