

TO: Faculty and Staff

FROM: Jeremy Haefner, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

DATE: 18 August 2016

SUBJECT: Instructional Continuity

As we begin a new academic year, we are all consumed with last-minute preparation for classes and activities. As you do your final reviews of syllabi and other materials, I urge you to keep in mind how continuity of instruction for the courses you teach might best be accomplished in the event of a short term interruption to instructional services.

Please keep the following in mind:

1. Interruptions to instructional services could be the result of many events, including illness (faculty and/or student), severe weather, loss of power, catastrophic event, etc.; affect all or parts of the campus; and be of varying durations. Consider personal interruptions to your ability to deliver coursework (illness, inability to get to campus, etc.), and wider interruptions to infrastructure (classrooms/labs, buildings, etc.) when planning for instructional continuity. Lynn Daley, director of Business Continuity, is available to assist faculty and department chairs in developing plans for instructional continuity and can be reached at lbdrmss@rit.edu or x5-7812.
2. The importance of emergency preparedness extends into the classroom. Students, even in higher education settings, look to the instructor for guidance and definitive action during an emergency. Faculty who take a few minutes at the start of each term to familiarize their students with basic evacuation and emergency procedures will find a peace of mind that they and their students are better prepared for an emergency. For more information about classroom emergency preparedness, please visit <http://emergency.rit.edu/response.php>.
3. Syllabi should include sufficient information about assignments and other learning activities to allow students to engage in a period of self-study, as needed. Let students know in writing that under certain circumstances, you may have to alter course requirements, assignment deadlines, and grading procedures; and the university may have to alter the academic calendar.
4. Review your attendance policy, and consider how you might modify it to help students who are unable to attend class to meet the course requirements without penalty.
5. You will need an alternative means – probably electronic – of communicating with students, and for receiving and returning student assignments. Our learning management system, myCourses, is well suited for this communication and I strongly encourage its use. I often hear from students that they wish faculty would use this medium so that they would have faster, more convenient access to information about their course. There are resources available for assisting you with this technology.

Teaching and Learning Services, part of the Innovative Learning Institute, has developed a [Teaching Element on Continuity of Instruction](#) that lists some ideas and resources that faculty can use to develop a COI plan. Visit [Teaching and Learning Services](#) for information on myCourses and other technologies that can assist you in planning alternate methods of communicating course content. If you would like

assistance with myCourses or other tools for continuity of instruction, please contact [Teaching and Learning Services Support](#) online or by phone (585) 475-2551.

6. Have a plan for communicating with other individuals who support student learning, e.g., your department chair, internship supervisors, graduate assistants, laboratory technicians, student advisors, etc.

A few years ago, as part of the Emerging Leaders program, a team of faculty and staff looked at the issue of continuity of instruction and produced a thoughtful report and recommendations. You can read the [full report](#) on my website. You will certainly have other ideas about how we can support instructional continuity. Please feel free to share them with your dean, department chair, and fellow faculty members.

In the event of a significant event that impacts the academic delivery of courses, the campus will turn to department chairs for their leadership in managing these issues. As a result, I strongly encourage each department chair to discuss this information with faculty members at a department meeting in the very near future and develop plans that address these issues and ensure the continuity of the academic mission. It is particularly important to have communication plans so that all members of the community can receive accurate and timely information. Department chairs should ensure that part-time and adjunct faculty members have the opportunity to review and ask questions about this memorandum, as well. Of course, the support of the faculty for the efforts of the chairs on this matter is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your cooperation in this important effort.