



August 19, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Now that the 2020 fall semester is beginning and RIT's Re-open Plan is in place, I am writing with the annual reminder to plan to maintain [continuity of instruction \(COI\)](#) in your courses and services in the event of a significant disruption. The possibility of a COVID-related move to online learning is the most urgent of these potential disruptions and I know those of you teaching blended and face to face courses have already been thinking about how you would maintain continuity of instruction in the event this becomes necessary. Other types of disruptions include weather-related closing, family emergency, illness, or campus evacuation. This memorandum provides guidance on the dimensions of [instructional continuity](#) and best practices for preparing a plan for COI. Given that most of you experienced the need for COI in your courses from last March through May, much of following information will not be new to you. I share it simply as a reminder.

1. [Instructional continuity](#) is a critical issue for all faculty and staff because we must be able to continue to support our students' academic progress, even during a significant emergency or an extended campus closure. Advance planning is key to maintaining continuity in the face of disruptions. The [Faculty Course Planning](#) section of the RIT Ready site has resources for preparing flexible courses and the Innovative Learning Institute is available to assist.
2. This fall, you will likely have more students than typical needing to be out of class for periods of time, including at the beginning of the semester. Students are not required to provide documentation of their need for health-related absences, though we have made arrangements for faculty notification if the absence is COVID related. Please be as flexible as possible in maintaining instructional continuity for students who may need to participate remotely for a period of time. Students should notify you that they will need to be absent and when they anticipate being able to rejoin the class. However, please follow up with any student for whom you receive a COVID-related absence notification.
3. You may also learn you will need to be absent from class for a period of time and it is equally important that you make plans for instructional continuity in the event you need to be away.
4. The importance of [emergency preparedness](#) extends into the classroom. Students in higher education settings look to the instructor for guidance and definitive action during an emergency. I encourage faculty to take a few minutes at the start of each term to familiarize their students with basic evacuation and emergency procedures to protect themselves and their students in the event of an emergency. For more information about classroom emergency preparedness, please go [here](#).
5. In addition to posting your syllabus on [myCourses](#), I recommend that you add a statement on the site informing students that under emergency circumstances, you may have to alter course

requirements, assignment deadlines, attendance expectations, and grading procedures and that the university may have to alter the academic calendar.

6. You will need an alternative means to deliver course content, communicate with students, and manage student assignments. Our learning management system, [myCourses](#), is well suited for these activities. The Innovative Learning Institute (ILI) has resources on [continuity of instruction](#) that provide faculty with ideas for developing a COI plan. Please contact ILI's [Teaching and Learning Services Support](#) online or by phone (585) 475-2551 for assistance with myCourses or other tools.
7. Have a plan for communicating with other individuals who support student learning, e.g., your department chair, graduate assistants, laboratory technicians, student advisors, etc.
8. If a significant event impacts the academic delivery of courses, the campus will turn to department chairs for their leadership in managing these issues. I strongly encourage department chairs to ensure that they have accurate contact information for every faculty and staff member in their department and work with them to develop plans that address the instructional continuity needs of their programs. Department chairs should also ensure that part-time and adjunct faculty have the opportunity to review and ask questions about instructional continuity.

This year, more than almost any other, instructional continuity is a critical responsibility of us all. Thank you for all you are already doing and will do this semester regarding this important effort.

Sincerely,

Ellen Granberg, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs