

RIT Student Workload Considerations

Current status: Spring break has been cancelled primarily to minimize travel, which will minimize the possibility of outside contagion to our campus. It is believed that it is safest for students, faculty, and staff to not leave campus for an extended break and return. The lack of extended break has brought forward some concerns and considerations, which follow.

Concerns

1. The non-stop and rigorous academic culture may overload students with work outside of the classroom. There may be an unrealistic sense of what students can accomplish given our current pandemic environment and instructional modes. Student burn-out will adversely affect student success. Many in the community have already pointed out that the 'student stress level' for fall is trending upward.
2. When students get behind in a course, there is a chain reaction of "borrowed time." A student needs to borrow time from another class to catch up, to attend tutoring, or to meet with faculty. It only takes a small breakdown in scheduling to create a time bottleneck that may be impossible for a student to resolve.
3. In an effort to address these concerns, we offer the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1. Good instructional design routinely suggests that "lean" instruction is most effective. Classes focusing on essential skills and knowledge, rather than volume of workload promote higher student success. Faculty are not asked to reduce the rigor of the outcomes; only to temper the path to attaining those outcomes by separating "nice-to-know" from "need-to-know" skills and assignments. (This may also be implemented in fall semester if possible.)
2. Students will be given access to myCourses two weeks prior to the beginning of the semester. Having your material in place at this time will allow students a head-start on classes. This is an opportunity in which students might be able to pre-read textbook chapters or other reading assignments, browse through the syllabi to better plan for the coming semester, or install software. In summary, the mental and physical health of our community is of paramount importance.

To support student success and progress towards degree completion, we ask that you assess the student workload in every class with an eye towards looking for ways to lighten up the student workload. In addition, providing students with early access to course materials will allow students the opportunity to get a head start on the semester and decrease work bottlenecks that can occur and cause undue anxiety and stress.