

April 5, 2021

Dear Academic Affair Colleagues,

Today, Fall semester shopping carts open for students and Fall registration appointments begin on April 12. Both of these activities signal that spring semester is winding down and commencement is close at hand.

I wanted to update you on our course schedule for fall. I am pleased to report the colleges were able to develop a schedule that allows us to offer approximately 80% of classes in person or in a blended format. To accomplish this, colleges have planned the schedule using the current occupancy restrictions which necessitate scheduling many classes in the blended (A/B split) format. I know this format can be a difficult one to implement. If CDC and New York State regulations regarding classroom occupancy are relaxed (which we hope will happen), we will migrate most of the blended (A/B split) classes to fully in-person. The communication to students about fall registration informed them of this plan and specifically advised them to take this into consideration as they plan their schedule.

Equally positive is the distribution of course modalities for first and second year students. You will remember that one of the scheduling priorities was to provide these two student cohorts with a majority of in person courses. At this point, approximately 83% of first year courses and 80% of second year courses are in person or in a blended format. This is outstanding.

I want to again thank the Registrar's Office, college leadership, department chairs, faculty, and the college scheduling officers for their work in creating a fall schedule under these complex circumstances.

Many of you have asked how we will accomplish the transition of the A/B splits to fully in person, and what types of class modalities you might be asked to undertake as we emerge from the pandemic. Let me provide some information on both issues.

A/B Splits to Fully In Person

The presence of A/B split classes in the fall schedule is solely because neither the CDC nor New York State has relaxed physical distancing requirements in higher education classrooms. I fully expect to see those requirements relaxed in the coming months, but it is impossible to know when that news will come and what form it will take. Our approach is to schedule using the current distancing requirements and to develop plans for transitions to both reduced distancing and a return to normal occupancy. Should the distancing requirements be relaxed, the Registrar's office, working with the college scheduling officers, will begin to make the transition of A/B splits to fully in person

sections. I ask for your understanding and patience with the process. I can commit that if we are able to make this type of transition, we will do so as quickly as possible and you will be notified by your scheduling officer as soon as possible when a course you are teaching in the A/B format is converted to fully in person.

Future of HyFlex

Many of you have asked about the future of the HyFlex option, which allows students to decide when to attend class in person and when to attend remotely. We have made no commitment about the use of HyFlex moving forward. This option proved very useful over the past year, as we searched for creative ways to ensure academic continuity while balancing room occupancy restrictions, student desire for flexibility, and departmental needs to offer large enrollment sections. I appreciate there was little time to plan for this, and the additional faculty workload was significant. In addition, I am aware that one of the unintended consequences was that in person class attendance greatly reduced over time. Please note that any decision about offering the HyFlex option beyond the fall semester will be reached in full consultation with the faculty. I have already begun discussions with the executive committee of the Academic Senate about this topic.

Thank you for your help, your understanding, and your amazing work as we ready ourselves for RIT's "next normal". If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at provost@rit.edu or to come to one of the next Provost Office Hours.

Sincerely,

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