



Date: March 14, 2020  
To: UNM Main and Branch Campus Instructors  
From: James Paul Holloway, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Re: Instructional Continuing during UNM Limiter Operations Period

*This message is primarily directed to UNM main and branch campus faculty teaching in the non-health schools. Faculty in HSC programs should look for direct communications from your program directors and chairs, and that information takes precedence over this message.*

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for all you are doing to support our students, our staff, and each other.

I want to encourage you to think about the period from March 23 to April 5 as a “soft-opening” to the remainder of the Spring semester. Neither faculty nor students will find it easy to shift rapidly to new, lower-presence, formats for course delivery. All of us face adjustments that involve personal considerations, such as childcare availability. Most of us as faculty need some time to develop the right approach to remote delivery of our courses or to redesign educational activities. It is difficult for students to keep up with a changing situation and evolving communications. Many of our students will have interpreted the phrase "Extended Spring Break" as meaning that there are no expectations for completing any course work between March 23 and April 5. Students did receive the following clarification on the evening of Friday, March 13 that included the expectation that they might receive electronically delivered coursework in UNM's period of limited operations: <http://www.unm.edu/coronavirus/critical-information-for-unm-students---alternate-instruction.pdf>.

Please note that Health Sciences Center and the School of Law follow somewhat different patterns and external accrediting requirements than Main and Branch campuses and that the guidance below may not apply to programs in these schools. All faculty should be in close communication and coordination with Chairs and Deans about individual contingencies, and one size does not fit all.

Note also that several of our colleagues have already planned to put much or all of their instruction online and into digitally mediated forms. **If you have done this, or plan to, you should give your students a week's notice before launching.** Many are unaware that they might start online between March 23 and April 5<sup>th</sup>, and will need to make plans and arrangements for this, ranging from arranging childcare to organizing internet access.

The deans and I have been in constant communication and wish to offer the following guidance. UNM is a complex place with over 10,000 course sections being offered this spring, so please be

aware that this is not meant to cover every case. Be in strong coordination with your local academic leadership as we move forward over the next few weeks. I don't think every course can go fully online, and we will have to manage all the different cases as well as we can to balance our need to flatten the curve of virus transmission and our need to help our students towards their future success, which if lost might never be regained.

### **Designing a *soft opening*:**

Please communicate with your students as soon as possible — even if you don't have a full plan for how you will manage the transition. They will appreciate hearing from you and learning that you care about them and the challenges they are facing and that you are committed to supporting them in completing the semester. Let them know that the next few weeks will be a period of transition and share that you will communicate regularly as you develop your instructional approach for the rest of the semester. **Assure them that you will provide at least one week of prior notice for all assignments**, especially during the period of UNM limited operations, from now through April 5<sup>th</sup>.

Faculty should definitely start posting materials and engaging with students for the soft opening (the current UNM period of limited operations between March 23 and April 5), but we should only have low stakes or ungraded assignments, given that some students will understandably think they are not responsible for assignments during "break." We discourage in-person group work for this period, but please check with your chair or dean in special cases.

Please exercise flexibility with students who may have interpreted early messaging as meaning that they are "off" from school or who are struggling to manage personal situations in the next few weeks. You are encouraged to offer alternative assignments and make-up opportunities to students who have not been able to stay in contact or keep up with work in the soft open period between March 23 and April 5.

### **Designing for your *modality*:**

Below are some guidelines to address, depending on whether you started teaching this semester face-to-face or online. In all cases, please coordinate with your deans and chairs. We have asked them to prioritize so that those courses that will have the most impact on flattening the curve of viral transmission will be addressed first, and so that available consultation resources at UNM will not be overwhelmed.

1. Face-to-face classes (16-week/full-term)
  - a. No face-to-face class meetings should be held between now and April 5
  - b. By April 5, we hope most classes can be ready to operate in new pedagogical modes, such as distance instruction, that reduce close interaction and lower the risk of viral transmission
  - c. Most large lectures should be prepared for some form of distance instruction
  - d. Many smaller classes may also be using distance instruction
  - e. Some classes will not be good fits for distance instruction and will meet face to face with appropriate reorganization to increase social distancing

- f. Instructors of all classes should communicate frequently with students
  - g. For these classes, start with low stakes assignments to keep students engaged and to get students used to new instructional modes
  - h. Exams should not be given during the period from March 23 – April 5.
2. Online classes (16-week/full-term)
- a. Keep to the original schedule so that you do not have to change all assignments
  - b. Send frequent messages to students about this
  - c. Expect to have to extend deadlines on some assignments
  - d. Lower the stakes and allow makeups for assignments
3. Second-half online classes (8-week/2H, scheduled to begin on or around March 23)
- a. Keep the planned schedule so that you do not have to change all assignments
  - b. Send frequent communications to students about this
  - c. Expect to have to extend some deadlines
  - d. Lower the stakes on assignments and allow makeups
4. Second half face-to-face classes (8-week/2H, scheduled to begin on or around March 23)
- a. Will have to be compressed into the weeks following April 5.
  - b. Send frequent communications to students with updates
  - c. May need online supplementation, which can begin March 23
  - d. May need to schedule additional face-to-face time

I appreciate your patience and resilience as I work with you and with academic leaders and health officials across the university and state to provide the best solutions in the face of a challenging situation. Remain in close communication and coordination with your deans and chairs. Also communicate frequently with students and give them lead time to adjust. As new questions arise, I too will be communicating regularly with you about ideas for addressing them. I hope that a soft opening will make it possible for everyone to hit their stride as of April 5.

This is what I see right now. Talented faculty and staff across the university are inventing smart approaches under constrained circumstances. The Center for Digital Learning and Academic Technologies developed and are continuing to develop focused information and workshops overnight. Faculty are swapping great teaching ideas and support. Staff are devising smart plans for everything from deep cleaning to remote advising. Chairs and directors are organizing, communicating, and designing solutions. We are all striving to deliver the very best to our community. Pay attention to your own wellbeing. This is UNM. Go Lobos!

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