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Messages from the Provost

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Dear Faculty,

As our Fall 2021 term is set to begin, we wanted to share some information that should help finalize class policies or procedures. To reiterate the message shared last week, we are excited about the start of a new academic year and welcoming our students back to campus and will continue to work closely with the University System of Georgia and Georgia Department of Public Health to prioritize the health and safety of our campus communities and share updates accordingly.

The transition to the new 2021 classroom will also take some adjustment for our students. Many courses offered significant flexibility last year that will no longer be in place, and again we ask that you be more intentional than usual in your communications with students about classroom expectations.

A great place to make those expectations clear is through Folio’s News feature. If you have not already, please activate your Folio course for each section immediately. Remember, your course delivery mode advertised at the time of scheduling is the mode by which you should deliver the course. As always, students will verify their attendance for all courses through Folio. This semester each Folio section will include a News item on the Attendance Verification Quiz and also a brief News item encouraging students to take advantage of the on-campus vaccination opportunities.

Below are a few quick notes on procedural questions that we’ve gotten in the past few weeks. Please make sure that you are discussing these and similar topics with your department and chair ahead of the start of term.

- **Attendance Policies** – as we discussed with the department chairs in the June Chairs Council meeting, attendance policies should be made at the course level just as they were in 2019. As discussed with chairs and deans last Spring, the university will continue to use the CARES system for reporting, and we ask that you make reasonable short-term adjustments for students with official reports. Absences through CARES are university sanctioned, and those students must have equal opportunity to complete the course through continual-access means or clearly defined make-up work. All students with official CARES reports will appear on your Class Roster in the MyApps dashboard (see the guide below for the improvements made to the Roster). We ask that you confer with your department chair on the best practice for your course.

- **CARES Accommodation Messaging** – Please include a continuity of education plan statement (in your syllabus or on your Folio site) explaining how students with official CARES reports will continue to participate in your course. With the benefit of last semester’s experience, we’ve worked with our ITS partners in developing an easier means of tracking and accommodating the specific students who are out with official CARES reports. Please see the [STEP-BY-STEP Guide for the new CARES Folio tool here](#).

While not entirely automated, we’ve been able to minimize the manual work for allowing the appropriate students to participate or continue working. ITS has built a “widget” in Folio that will auto-populate in individual Folio sites for you when a student has an official CARES report allowing you to communicate your specific instructions for the course. This will appear in Folio only to those students who are currently under CARES guidance to be in quarantine.

- **Final Exams** – will revert to the existing policy in the Faculty Handbook, which follows the university exam calendar available on the Registrar’s website. As always, exceptions to the exam policy are made through department chair and dean approval.

- **Office Hours** – as discussed with the chairs during the July Chairs Council, Office Hours should return closer to pre-pandemic normal. We know that some students will continue to prefer virtual meetings, but we do expect faculty to hold some in-person opportunities for student conferences.
We are grateful to see so many departments participating in our new student orientation and transitions days ahead of the semester. We are in high hopes for a promising new year.

Office of the Provost

Last updated: 8/13/2021