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Messages from the Provost

Georgia Southern University

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Good morning everyone,

We’ve made it to the end of the second week post-transition. We have heard some truly wonderful things back from students and parents about the lengths you are going to in an effort to build some normalcy back into our classes. Your pedagogical creativity during this pandemic has been genuinely impressive.

The end of this week also marks the 15-day point. Starting Monday, we will have 15 instructional days left in the semester. Many of us have plans, but students might not be aware of how final exams will function. Hopefully, you’re deans and chairs have already been in touch about final exam planning.

Finals tend to be a stressful time for students in the best circumstances, and these are definitely more trying times. As you plan your final exams, please keep in mind that students will need considerable flexibility, and in many (if not most) cases they will not be able to sit for a single isolated period of time to complete an exam. Like many of us, our students are contending with child care, sharing devices with family members, experiencing connectivity issues, or might be essential workers with new schedules.

Anxiety and Counseling
The Counseling Center has put together a series of on-line workshops for students, faculty, and staff. Please visit this page for more information.

Incompletes
We received some questions about Incompletes. Please see the attached sample form for an Incomplete Agreement. It outlines the information that you’ll need to update the grade as well as providing a space for expectations and acknowledgments. While today is the final day for students to take a Withdraw, we really encourage you to provide them the option of an Incomplete.

Exam Design
As you design your exams, please consider the following:

- **Open Exams early** – opening access to exams for an extended period will allow students with issues like those mentioned above to complete these tests. You should not set a deadline any earlier than the times published on the Registrar’s site and included in your original syllabus.

- **Extend Exam periods** – students with connectivity issues might need more time to complete exams if they are dropped from a wifi signal.

- **Proctoring and Respondus might not be the best option** – unless there is an accreditation-based requirement for proctoring, please reconsider requiring an exam proctor. Students taking exams from Chromebooks and Android phones will not be able to use the Respondus Lockdown Browser at all.

- **Computer Labs will not be open for all students** – it is not mathematically possible for all students to have access to computer lab space. Please do not construct your finals with the understanding that students will simply be able to take it in a computer lab rather than their device. Those of you using software that requires remote access must take availability into consideration when defining your accessibility of your exam.

- **Alternative Assignments** – where possible, think about assessments that do not require limited time-frames. The take-home-exam still exists for a reason.

Please discuss options and ideas and concerns with your chair regarding exams as soon as possible.
We know that offering alternative assignments can take more time to grade than objective exams (especially those auto-graded in Folio). Our grade deadline is vital to allow for grade processing, academic standing, and financial aid review ahead of the following semester. Failing to submit grades on-time has financial aid implications for all of our students, not just those in your course.

Please keep to the posted grade deadline of Saturday, May 9 at 11:59 p.m. While sadly we will not be able to experience commencement in-person with our students, we will have that time back to complete grading. If you are in a situation where you feel you will have trouble meeting the grade submission deadline because you’ve created an asynchronous alternative, please reach out to your chair immediately for advice and support.

I hope everyone is staying physically and mentally well.

Sincerely,

Office of the Provost

Last updated: 8/18/2021