

Dear colleagues,

With thanks to you all for the extraordinary efforts and ingenuity that you are bringing to our academic mission, and to the faculty and staff who gather in committees and meetings to answer questions and discern solutions for our most unusual spring 2020 semester, we welcome you to these regular communications about academic continuity.

Thank You, Academic Support Assistants!

We salute the ASAs who are supporting faculty members through setting up Blackboard courses and tests and uploading materials and so much more. Your help is greatly appreciated. We could not succeed without you and your expertise and hard work.

Synchronous Versus Asynchronous Classes

While the idea that keeping some synchronous interactions may help students feel connected to you and each other, there is growing concern that using synchronous learning as the primary means of delivering course content will result in an inequitable learning experience. To avoid these inequities, including time zone differences to the need for internet bandwidth to scheduling conflicts, **we encourage you to depressurize those live/synchronous sessions by making them optional or turning them into office hours** (and offering them at various days/times during the week). Learn more about this issue on the Instructional Continuity's ["Accessibility and Inclusion"](#) page.

Guidance on Equity of Access to Course Content

As we move to distance learning, some students outside of the United States may not be able to access course content without fear of repercussion based on the political conditions in their place of residence. If a student is uncomfortable or unable to access course content as a result, Grinnell College is offering the following guidance to faculty and students alike:

- The student may request, or the faculty member may provide of their own volition, alternative content and/or assignments for course completion. While not ideal from an educational perspective, this option will allow students to maintain current credit levels moving forward. It is the College's hope that the faculty member would make the original course content available to the affected student at a later date.
- The faculty member may opt to weigh the first half of the semester more heavily than the second for students in this situation, allowing for an "opt-out" on particular material and/or assignments where necessary.
- The College has extended the course withdrawal deadline until April 10. This will give affected students an opportunity to consider their options and make an informed decision. If withdrawing from the course would drop the student below full time status (12 credits), they must contact [Joyce Stern](#), dean for student success and advising, regarding the College's [request to carry an academic load below 12 credits](#). If this is an [F-1](#) student, a drop below 12 credits also requires prior authorization for a Reduced Course Load ([RCL](#)) via [Karen Edwards](#), associate dean and director of international

student affairs.

- After April 10, the student may request an emergency course withdrawal. Students would make such a request through [Joyce Stern](#), dean for student success and advising. If this is an [F-1](#) student, a drop below 12 credits also requires prior authorization for a Reduced Course Load ([RCL](#)) via [Karen Edwards](#), associate dean and director of international student affairs.

The College will include a brief statement of context on all student transcripts, indicating that coursework in the spring of 2020 proceeded in crisis conditions. It is our hope that this will alleviate student concerns about “W” appearing on transcripts should they decide to withdraw from a course due to compromised access to course materials.

Grinnellians Stay Connected

We’re creating a global virtual community that offers resources and support for our students, faculty, and staff. When you’re posting on social media, we encourage you to use the hashtag #GrinnelliansStayConnected. Grinnellians will be able to share and find these resources [on our website](#).

Faculty Meeting on April 6

We will hold our regularly scheduled faculty meeting (virtually, via WebEx) at 4 p.m. April 6. We will forward an agenda and instructions on joining next week.

As ever, please do not hesitate to reach out to your Executive Council representatives and Associate Deans with questions and ideas.

In admiration,

Anne F. Harris, Dean of the College

Todd Armstrong, Chair of the Faculty