11 March 2020

MEMORANDUM

To: SUNY Chief Academic Officers

From: Tod A. Laursen, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor

Subject: Follow-up to Today’s Academic Program Continuity Planning Webinar (COVID-19)

Thanks to all of you for joining in our webinar this afternoon on academic program continuity. Please share this follow-up note with all who were in attendance. First, I’ll recognize that our session was preceded by a press conference by Governor Cuomo in which he addressed plans for SUNY and CUNY related to COVID-19. That announcement has been discussed in greater detail with your campus presidents. For the purposes of academic continuity, I’ll just share that the resulting news headlines did not capture the nuances of the Governor’s plan as well as the Governor’s subsequent press release, which states:

“The Governor also announced the State University of New York and the City University of New York will implement plans to maximize distance learning and reduce in-person classes, beginning March 19th, for the remainder of the Spring semester in light of the evolving novel coronavirus situation in New York. All campuses will develop plans catered to the campus and curriculum-specific needs while reducing density in the campus environment to help slow possibility for exposures to novel coronavirus. Distance learning and other options will be developed by campuses.”

This excerpt really gets to the driving principles of our focus on academic continuity which recognize that:

1) Going “online” can mean everything from using phone conferences, email, Zoom or Webex, use of your Learning Management System with videoconferencing or teleconferencing, or actually moving classes to delivery online via Open SUNY or SUNY Online;
2) How this is implemented will vary across campuses;
3) At this time, we anticipate a number of exceptions/hardships which will require ongoing campus use for living and instruction: students with limited access to the internet, students who can’t go home, labs/studio/field-based work not easily conducted remotely, etc. The webinar discussed multiple options for reducing density of students (breaking up classes into smaller groups to allow for social
distancing, extending the time period over which certain requirements can be met, etc."

Resources from today:

- The recording of the webinar;
- A .pdf of the PowerPoint slides used for the webinar;
- A link to the online tools resource page mentioned;
- Link to Governor Cuomo press release;
- Relevant 3/9/20 memo from MSCHE (Middle States Commission on Higher Education); and
- Relevant 3/5/20 guidance from the US Department of Education.

We are preparing a written document to capture answers provided to the questions posed pre-session and during the webinar and will have that to you as soon as possible. In the interim, feel free to direct questions to: provost@suny.edu.

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