MEMORANDUM

TO: University Faculty

Laura Beauvais

FROM: Laura Beauvais, Ph.D.
              Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs

DATE: August 20, 2018

SUBJECT: Attendance Policy, Grading Criteria, Syllabi Statements, etc.

Welcome back! This memo describes important information that is intended to help you have a successful start to the semester. As you all know, your course syllabus is an important document that communicates mutual expectations between you and your students, including your course expectations, learning outcomes, deadlines, attendance policies, grading criteria, and other important information. Please note section 8.50.30 of the University Manual: "All instructors shall make available a syllabus in the first week of class, or first day of class for fully-online accelerated programs (8.51.24), to students enrolled in each of their courses. Syllabi components should clearly communicate classroom policies, essential aspects of the course, and expectations of student participation." In addition to meeting Faculty Senate approved policies, you will be providing students with a basis for making decisions about their chances for success and the wisdom of continuing their enrollment in your course. You will also provide those students who do remain enrolled with a clear set of guidelines on which to base their study schedules and judge their performance. The clear outlining of expectations helps to ensure that students in your classes are fully aware of your academic standards. As you develop your syllabi, please refer to the excellent resources available on the website of the Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (http://web.uri.edu/atl/), specifically the checklist for developing a good syllabus http://web.uri.edu/teach/syllabus/. For other general information for faculty, please check out the following website: https://www.uri.edu/gateway/faculty/

The *University Manual* also contains information that will be helpful to you in preparing your syllabus. I refer particularly to the following sections: 8.39.10-12 (attendance); 8.51.11-14 (excused absences); 8.51.15 (examinations during the semester); 8.51.16 (final examinations); 8.27.10-19 (plagiarism—instructor's responsibilities, judicial action, and student's responsibilities); and 8.52.10 (grading criteria). Each semester, issues are directed to this office that are addressed specifically in these sections. A recent area of concern is the use of electronic equipment during class and examinations, e.g., cell phones, iPads, laptops, etc. It might be prudent to include guidelines related to their use in your syllabus. Also, note that the Academic Testing Center is available for you to schedule students for make-up exams or those who need special accommodations (web.uri.edu/atc).

Please be aware in your communications with and about a student's academic progress in your course, FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) regulations prohibit any disclosure of "personally identifiable information" from a student's "education record" without the prior written consent of the student.   For more detailed information on FERPA regulations, please go to: https://web.uri.edu/faculty/studentprivacy/

Please pay special attention to section 8.51.16, which states the University's long-standing policy against administering examinations during the final week of classes or at other inappropriate times.   Specifically, it states the following:

… *Faculty members cannot administer an examination during the last five days classes are in session in lieu of a final examination, but must instead postpone such an examination to be administered according to the final examination schedule.*

In order to avoid conflicts with final examinations, it is most helpful to list the time of the final for your course in the syllabus and to provide students with the link to the schedule so they are on notice to plan ahead. (See exam schedule at http://web.uri.edu/enrollment/academic-calendars/)

The remainder of Chapter 8 contains other academic regulations that you will want to review in preparation for the new semester.   The *University Manual* is available on the University website through the Faculty Senate webpage. (See http://www.uri.edu/facsen/)

With regard to academic honesty, understanding the culture of source management and attribution in academe is a process of learning and relearning, with increasing complexity over time. Our goal is to better distinguish between intentional plagiarism or cheating, and making mistakes. URI's Student Handbook (http://web.uri.edu/studentconduct/student-handbook/) provides guidelines concerning academic honesty in this regard. Additional assistance is available at the Writing Center and the Academic Enhancement Center.   It may be useful to add a statement in your syllabi using the following language:

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student's name on any written work, quiz or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student's own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student's own words, properly attributed to its source.   Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty.

• *Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation*
• *Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently*
• *Unauthorized possession or access to exams*
• *Unauthorized communication during exams*
• *Unauthorized use of another's work or preparing work for another student*
• *Taking an exam for another student*
• *Altering or attempting to alter grades*
• *The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams*
• *Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references*
• *Facilitating or aiding another's academic dishonesty*
• *Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the instructors.*

I urge you to provide students with as much information as possible about test schedules, office hours, availability of special tutorial sessions, and expectations on individual assignments. Providing such information

can help avoid misunderstanding, frustration—on both sides—and foster a better acceptance of responsibility by our students. In addition, it is most helpful if you make students aware of special services. Two important ones are the Office of Disability Services for Students and the Academic Enhancement Center. For the first, a helpful statement could be as follows:

Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with Disability Services for Students Office at 302 Memorial Union, 401-874-2098 (https://web.uri.edu/disability/) or the Academic Skills Center, 239 Shepard Building, Alan Shawn Feinstein Providence Campus, 401-277-5221 (https://web.uri.edu/ceps/academic-skills-center/).

For the second, students should be encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to enrich their learning as follows:

This is a challenging course. Success requires that you keep pace with the work, understand course concepts, and study effectively. The Academic Enhancement Center helps URI students succeed through three services: Academic Coaching, Tutoring, and The Writing Center. To learn more about any of these services, please visit https://web.uri.edu/aec/ or call 401-874-2367 to speak with reception staff. In Providence, the Academic Skills Center (ASC) is at 239 Shepard Building, (401) 277-5221. Hours are posted each semester at https://web.uri.edu/ceps/academic-skills-center/

To ensure that we are providing opportunities for all students to be successful, course materials need to be accessible to all students (e.g., videos, audios, texts, etc.) in both face to face and online courses. If you need help in determining solutions to accessibility issues, please contact the Office of Disability Services, the Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, and/or ITS Instructional Technology and Media Services (https://web.uri.edu/itms/).

The IDEA course evaluation has moved to online administration. Faculty will be able to administer the evaluations in the classroom (as well as direct students to take them outside of class) and students will be able to use multiple devices to complete the evaluation. We will continue to provide webinars, videos, and workshops to assist faculty in setting up their evaluations as well as in interpreting and using the results. If you would like to review the online evaluation system, please go to: https://www.ideaedu.org/Services/Student-Ratings-of-Instruction-Tools. It is helpful as you develop your syllabus with your course learning objectives, to think ahead about the IDEA course objectives that will be measured at the end of the semester. There are now 13 revised objectives from which to select. While you may want your students to master all of these objectives, you should be choosing 2 or 3 essential and 2 or 3 important objectives and reflect ones that are critical learning objectives for your course that you intend to assess. The average for the schools in the IDEA database for the essential and important objectives combined is five. As you shape and refine your course outlines for this semester, these (or your rendition of these) should be added to enhance student understanding (from the very first day of class) of what you would like students to get out of their experience with you. The 13 IDEA course objectives are listed below for your convenience:

1. Gaining a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories)
2. Developing knowledge and understanding of diverse perspectives, global awareness, or other cultures
3. Learning to Apply Course Material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)
4. Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course

5. Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team
6. Developing creative capacities (inventing, designing, writing, performing in art, music, drama, etc.)
7. Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity
8. Developing skill in expressing myself orally or in writing
9. Learning how to find, evaluate, and use resources to explore a topic in depth
10. Developing ethical reasoning and/or ethical decision making
11. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view
12. Learning to apply knowledge and skills to benefit others or serve the public good
13. Learning appropriate methods for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting numerical information

Thoughtful incorporation of the appropriate learning objectives in your course syllabus at the beginning of the semester is likely to yield more reliable and informative student feedback at the end of your course.

Lastly, for those faculty who are using video capture in their classrooms in order to make recordings available to students for review, there are some privacy issues to consider. If the video captures only the instructor and course materials, there are no issues. If the video captures images or voices of your students AND you intend to use these recordings in another class or for any another purpose, students must be notified of this in advance on the syllabus and you must provide accommodations for students who do not wish to appear in class recordings.

Thank you for reading this very long but hopefully informative memo. A clear syllabus that includes expectations, objectives, and support opportunities is a significant tool in enhancing student learning and retention, which is a major concern for all of us.

Best wishes for an enjoyable and productive semester.

c: Academic Deans