

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** University Faculty

**FROM:** Anne Veeger, Ph.D.  
Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Initiatives

**DATE:** August 25, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Semester Information and Course Syllabus Guidance

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Dear Faculty,

We are about to embark upon an extraordinary semester, so this traditional “syllabus” memo has been expanded to capture information related to the URI COVID response and re-opening plan. It provides a summary of information that you may find helpful as you develop your course syllabi and prepare for the coming semester. Visit <https://web.uri.edu/coronavirus/> for additional information about the URI reopening plans and copies of all communications distributed by URI Communications. Please monitor emails from [uricommunity@ais.uri.edu](mailto:uricommunity@ais.uri.edu) for regular updates.

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## NEWS & EVENTS

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- **ITS Orientation Days** – Come to one of the ITS Orientation Days on August 27<sup>th</sup> or Sept 1. Visit <https://web.uri.edu/its-training/training/> to see the full training calendar, including drop-in help for account access and password help from 8am to 8pm M-F. Additional information specific to online teaching is available here: <https://web.uri.edu/its-covid19/>
- **ITS Service desk** is now available virtually! The new ITS website (<https://its.uri.edu>) shows all virtual support hours in a dedicated box right at the top, includes a searchable resource center and a password help ticket.
- **Brightspace** is the URI LMS (Learning Management System) for the Fall 2020 semester. Please complete the self-paced Brightspace course to get started - <https://web.uri.edu/teachonline/basic-brightspace-training/> Visit <https://web.uri.edu/brightspace/> for information and updates about the transition to Brightspace, including information about migrating content from [Sakai to Brightspace](#).
- If you have not done so already, complete the [single-sign on password unification](#) to access Brightspace (and other URI software applications).
- **Zoom** is now available: <https://web.uri.edu/itservicesdesk/zoom-at-uri/>
- **Missed a Summer 2020 ATL Conversation or Town Hall you were interested in?** Recorded portions are available via URI login here: [web.uri.edu/teach/atl-conversations/](https://web.uri.edu/teach/atl-conversations/) Videos for faculty and students on Brightspace and other technologies remain available on ATL’s [Teach Online at URI YouTube Channel](#)
- **Fall 2020 Academic Calendar** - Note – face-to-face classes transition to remote/online delivery after the Thanksgiving break.
- **Summer 2020 IDEA results** are available for review - <https://web.uri.edu/provost/idea/>.

**FALL TEACHING KITS:** We are providing teaching kits for faculty who are scheduled to teach face-to-face during the fall semester. Kits include wipes, hand sanitizer, 3 disposable masks, 1 re-usable mask, and dry erase markers. Stay tuned for distribution information.

**CLASSROOM BEST PRACTICES FROM HEALTH SERVICES:** See the attached Faculty Partnership on Health Safety Guidelines for suggested steps faculty can take to decrease risk of transmission.

**RHODY CONNECT APP:** Encourage students to download the [Rhody Connect](#) app - a one-stop shop for all things related to life at URI. Access to the daily health self-assessment, study space information, events, classes, dining menus, etc.

### COMMUNITY GUIDANCE:

**All URI community members will be required to:**

- Wear a mask at all times when on a URI campus. The only exceptions are when you are in your residence hall room with the door closed, in a private office alone, or if you have a health accommodation that has been shared with Health Services (students) or Human Resources (faculty/staff).
- Complete the [daily health self-assessment](#) prior to coming to campus or leaving your residence hall room. URI Health Services is working with the University community to support our health and well-being. This screening form has been incorporated into the [Rhody Connect](#) app.
- Stay six feet apart from everyone when possible.
- Adhere to the social gathering group size limits of fifteen (15) or fewer, as of 8/6/20.
- Wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer that is readily available across campus.
- Avoid touching your face.

**DAILY HEALTH ASSESSMENT:** Remember to complete your [daily health assessment](#) before you come to campus

**CRUSH COVID app:** [CRUSH COVID RI](#) is a one-stop place to get all the information you need about COVID-19 in Rhode Island, including a location diary.

**STUDENT QUARANTINE REQUIREMENT:** Students from [states](#) with a higher than 5 percent positivity rate or who are traveling from an international location are required to complete a 14-day quarantine before coming to campus and attending face-to-face classes. Campus residents from these states are scheduled to move in on Aug 24 and 25, allowing for a 14-day quarantine before classes begin. Quarantine for students residing in off-campus housing may extend through the start of classes depending on their move-in date. Please work with those students to accommodate their absence.

**COVID SYLLABUS STATEMENT:** *As we prepare to resume classes this fall, I ask that each of you please include the following (or similar) language in your syllabi:*

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The University is committed to delivering its educational mission while protecting the health and safety of our students. At this uncertain time, those concerns include minimizing the potential spread of COVID-19 within our community. While the university has worked this summer to create a healthy learning environment for all, it is up to all of us to ensure our campus stays that way.

As members of the URI community, students are required to comply with standards of conduct and take precautions to keep themselves and others safe. Students are required to comply with Rhode Island state laws, including the Rhode Island Executive Orders related to health and safety, ordinances, regulations, and guidance adopted by the University as it relates to public health crises, such as COVID-19.

[An addendum on policies and guidelines concerning your obligations](#) during this crisis has recently been integrated into the Student Handbook. These obligations include:

- Wearing of face masks by all community members when on a URI campus in the presence of others
- Maintaining physical distancing of at least six feet at all times
- Following state rules on the number of individuals allowed in a group gathering
- Completing a [daily health self-assessment](#) also available through the [Rhody Connect](#) app before coming to campus
- Submitting to COVID-19 testing as the University monitors the health of our community
- Following the University's quarantine and isolation requirements

**If you answer yes to any of the questions on the daily health assessment, do not come to class.** YOU MUST STAY HOME/IN YOUR ROOM and notify URI Health Services via phone at 401-874-2246 immediately.

**If you are already on campus and start to feel ill,** you need to remove yourself from the public and notify URI Health Services via phone immediately at 401-874-2246 and go home/back to your room and self-isolate while you await direction from Health Services.

If you are unable to attend class, please notify me at 874-xxxx or [xxx@uri.edu](mailto:xxx@uri.edu) or through the medium we have established for the class. We will work together to ensure that course instruction and work is completed for the semester.

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#### FALL SCHEDULE:

- **Thanksgiving Transition:** All face-to-face classes transition to remote/online delivery after the Thanksgiving break.
- **Fall 2020 Final Exams:** Both face-to-face and synchronous online courses must administer final exams according to the Fall 2020 Final exam calendar. Asynchronous online courses do not have a scheduled final exam timeslot and should use an asynchronous assessment if administering a final exam. Please consult with the [ATL](#) for support and resources regarding assessment strategies for your online courses.

**SYLLABUS QUICK TIPS FOR FALL 2020:** Please visit <https://web.uri.edu/teach/syllabus/> for syllabus resources.

- Use assigned seats for face-to-face classes
- Establish virtual office hours, by appointment or for drop-in, for all course modalities
- Clearly indicate which platforms students will need to use and where to find them
- Establish online class conduct and communication expectations in collaboration with your students
- Clearly communicate class attendance/participation expectations for all course modalities
- Communicate options for remote participation and accommodating absences
- Use the course calendar in Brightspace so that students can easily find all due dates and course milestones

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### STUDENT SUPPORT AND SUCCESS

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**SYLLABUS STATEMENTS:** We ask you to include these statements (or similar) in your syllabi:

***Anti-Bias Syllabus Statement:*** We respect the rights and dignity of each individual and group. We reject prejudice and intolerance, and we work to understand differences. We believe that equity and inclusion are critical components for campus community members to thrive. If you are a target or a witness of a bias incident, you are encouraged to submit a report to the URI Bias Response Team at [www.uri.edu/brt](http://www.uri.edu/brt). There you will also find people and resources to help.

**Disability Services for Students Statement:** Your access in this course is important. Please send me your Disability Services for Students (DSS) accommodation letter early in the semester so that we have adequate time to discuss and arrange your approved academic accommodations. If you have not yet established services through DSS, please contact them to engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations in the classroom. DSS can be reached by calling: 401-874-2098, visiting: [web.uri.edu/disability](http://web.uri.edu/disability), or emailing: [dss@etal.uri.edu](mailto:dss@etal.uri.edu). We are available to meet with students enrolled in Kingston as well as Providence courses.

**Academic Enhancement Center (for undergraduate courses):** Located in Roosevelt Hall, the AEC offers free face to face and web-based services to undergraduate students seeking academic support. Peer tutoring is available for STEM-related courses through drop-in centers and small group tutoring. The Writing Center offers peer tutoring focused on supporting undergraduate writers at any stage of a writing assignment. The UCS160 course and academic skills consultations offer students strategies and activities aimed at improving their studying and test-taking skills. Complete details about each of these programs, up-to-date schedules, contact information and self-service study resources are all available on the AEC website, [web.uri.edu/aec](http://web.uri.edu/aec).

Descriptions of AEC services if you wish to provide additional details:

- **STEM Tutoring** helps students navigate 100 and 200 level math, chemistry, physics, biology, and other select STEM courses. The STEM Tutoring program offers free online and limited in-person peer-tutoring this fall. Undergraduates in introductory STEM courses have a variety of small group times to choose from and can select occasional or weekly appointments. Appointments and locations will be visible in the TutorTrac system on September 14th, 2020. The TutorTrac application is available through [URI Microsoft 365](http://URI Microsoft 365) single sign-on and by visiting [aec.uri.edu](http://aec.uri.edu). More detailed information and instructions can be found at [uri.edu/aec/tutoring](http://uri.edu/aec/tutoring).
- **Academic Skills Development** resources helps students plan work, manage time, and study more effectively. In Fall 2020, all Academic Skills and Strategies programming are offered both online and in-person. **UCS160: Success in Higher Education** is a one-credit course on developing a more effective approach to studying. **Academic Consultations** are 30-minute, 1 to 1 appointments that students can schedule on Starfish with Dr. David Hayes to address individual academic issues. **Study Your Way to Success** is a self-guided web portal connecting students to tips and strategies on studying and time management related topics. For more information on these programs, visit [uri.edu/aec/academic-skills](http://uri.edu/aec/academic-skills) or contact Dr. Hayes directly at [davidhayes@uri.edu](mailto:davidhayes@uri.edu).
- **The Undergraduate Writing Center** provides free writing support to students in any class, at any stage of the writing process: from understanding an assignment and brainstorming ideas, to developing, organizing, and revising a draft. Fall 2020 services are offered through two online options: 1) real-time **synchronous appointments** with a peer consultant (25- and 50-minute slots, available Sunday - Friday), and 2) written **asynchronous consultations** with a 24-hour turn-around response time (available Monday - Friday). Synchronous appointments are video-based, with audio, chat, document-sharing, and live captioning capabilities, to meet a range of accessibility needs. View the synchronous and asynchronous schedules and book online, visit [uri.mywconline.com](http://uri.mywconline.com).

**Graduate Writing Center (for graduate courses):** The [Graduate Writing Center](http://Graduate Writing Center) provides writing support to all URI doctoral and master's students to foster continuing development of academic and professional writing skills necessary to succeed in graduate programs and academic or professional careers.

**ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:** To ensure that we are supporting the success of all students, course materials need to be accessible (e.g., videos, audio recording, texts, etc.) in face-to-face, blended and fully online courses.

[The Office of Disability Services for Students](http://The Office of Disability Services for Students) provides [resources for faculty and staff](http://resources for faculty and staff).

[The Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning](http://The Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning) also has resources available:

<https://web.uri.edu/teachonline/basics-of-accessibility-online/>.

[ITS Instructional Technology and Media Services](http://ITS Instructional Technology and Media Services) provides information and support about [captioning video content](http://captioning video content). Adding captioning to video content is an essential step in making videos accessible to all viewers – especially for learners who are deaf or have low hearing. Captions are also shown to increase comprehension for students whose native language is different from what is spoken in the video.

## UNIVERSITY MANUAL REQUIREMENTS

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Please familiarize yourself with [Chapter 8](#) of the University Manual which contains important academic regulations.

**Course Syllabus Requirement ([University Manual 8.50.30](#))** – According to 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 satisfying Faculty Senate approved policies, your syllabus communicates mutual expectations between you and your students and serves as a roadmap to successful course completion, including your course scope, expectations, learning outcomes, deadlines, attendance policies, grading criteria, and other important information. Please provide students with information about assessment/major paper/project due dates, office hours, availability of special tutorial sessions, and expectations on individual vs group work. This clear outlining of expectations helps to ensure that students in your classes understand how they will be assessed and are fully aware of your academic standards. Providing such information can help avoid misunderstanding, frustration—on both sides—and foster acceptance of responsibility by our students.

A topic of considerable recent debate, is the use of technology during class and examinations, e.g., cell phones, iPads, laptops, etc. You may wish to include guidelines related to their use in your syllabus.

If you are interested in learning more on this topic, see article from Yale Poorvu Center on Teaching and Learning on Use of Electronic Devices in Class: <https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/Using-Electronic-Devices-in-Class>.

As you develop your courses and syllabi, please refer to the faculty development resources offered through the Office for the [Advancement of Teaching and Learning](#), including the [syllabus development resources](#) and the [Faculty Information](#) web page for links to information on teaching & advising, technology, research and administration/policies.

The *University Manual* also contains information that is helpful in preparing your syllabus. I refer particularly to the following sections in [Chapter 8 of the Manual](#): [8.27.10-19](#) (plagiarism—instructor's responsibilities, judicial action, and student's responsibilities); [8.39.10-12](#) (attendance); and [8.51.10-27](#) (examinations). Each semester, issues are directed to this office that are addressed specifically in these sections.

**Final Exams** - Please pay special attention to section [8.51.16](#), which states the University's long-standing policy regarding administering examinations during the final week of classes -  
... *Final examinations are not required by the university, but any final examination, with the exception of take-home examinations, must be administered according to the final examination schedule prepared by the Office of Enrollment Services. ....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 helpful to list the time of the final for your course in the syllabus and to provide students with the link to the final exam schedule so they can plan ahead. (Final exam schedule will be posted at <https://web.uri.edu/enrollment/final-exam-schedules/>)

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## OTHER TOPICS

**FERPA** - Please be aware in your communications with students and about a student's academic progress in your course, that 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: <http://security.uri.edu/policies/ferpa/>

**Video Capture** – There are some privacy issues to consider for those faculty who are using video capture in their classrooms in order to make recordings available to students for review. 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.

**Academic Integrity** - 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*

**Student Feedback** – URI uses the [IDEA Diagnostic Feedback Instrument](#) to collect student feedback. As you develop your syllabus and course learning objectives, please think ahead to their alignment with IDEA course objectives that will be measured at the end of the semester (see list below). Incorporation of relevant learning objectives in your course syllabus is likely to yield more reliable and informative student feedback on the IDEA feedback form at the end of your course. Instructors will be able to set IDEA objectives for their courses from late October until December 15th. While you may want your students to master many of the IDEA objectives, you should choose no more than 2 or 3 essential and 2 or 3 important objectives that are critical learning objectives for your course. Choosing a larger number of objectives will limit the usefulness of your feedback. The student response period begins ~2 weeks before the end of classes and closes at 11:59 pm on the December 15<sup>th</sup>; students can use a variety of devices e.g. (laptop, cell phone, tablet) and in order to maximize response rates, faculty are encouraged to provide 15 minutes at the beginning of a class (if online synchronous) for students to complete the IDEA survey. Results are available to Instructors, Chairs, and Deans 2 days after official grades are officially posted for the semester.

The 13 IDEA course objectives are listed below for your convenience (with links to IDEA resources):

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*

The Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning provides [support for setting your objectives and interpreting your results](#). If you would like to review the elements of the IDEA instrument, please go to: <https://www.ideaedu.org/Services/Student-Ratings-of-Instruction-Tools>. If you have questions about how the process works at URI or are looking for ways to increase response rates please visit: [web.uri.edu/provost/idea-procedure](http://web.uri.edu/provost/idea-procedure), or contact Sean Krueger at, [skrueger@uri.edu](mailto:skrueger@uri.edu).

Thank you for all the work you do supporting the success of your students and best wishes for a safe and productive semester.

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c: Academic Deans