THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

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THINK BIG ● WE DO

MEMORANDUM

TO: University Faculty

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

DATE: August 10, 2021 (UPDATED 8/12/2021 to reflect Universal Masking)

SUBJECT: Semester Information and Course Syllabus Guidance

Dear Faculty - As we approach the fall semester, we know that you have many questions about the return to campus and classes for the fall semester. Visit web.uri.edu/coronavirus/ for the latest information about URI plans and copies of all communications distributed by URI Communications. Updates about academic plans will also be posted on the Provost Office website as we approach the start of the semester.

COVID-19 UPDATES

COVID VACCINATIONS AVAILABLE ON THE KINGSTON CAMPUS: We want to remind you that getting vaccinated is the one of the most effective ways to protect yourself and everyone around you. URI is hosting vaccination clinics throughout August and September. The clinics are free and open to students, faculty, staff and others in their immediate circle, such as family or household members. Vaccinations are also readily available throughout the State.

STUDENT VACCINATION REQUIREMENT: All URI students are required to submit proof of vaccination or request an exemption. Exempted students who are not fully vaccinated will need to wear a mask and maintain physical distancing while on campus. Students who do not provide full proof of vaccination or request an exemption will have a COVID-19 Vaccine Hold placed on their accounts and will be unable to access in-person classes, housing, and other on-campus services. Details about the requirement and student instructions are available here.

COVID TESTING: Students who are unvaccinated with an approved exemption will be required to participate in regular surveillance testing either on the Kingston campus or at an off-site location if coming to Kingston is not convenient. Vaccinated students are not mandated but have full access to surveillance testing as well. Symptomatic testing will be available daily, including weekends for students with any symptoms. Free asymptomatic testing is also available for faculty, staff and students at state-run testing sites across RI, including locations convenient to our campuses.

MASKS IN CLASSROOMS(UPDATED 8/12): Universal indoor masking is required by all community members, on all campuses, regardless of vaccination status. If the universal mask mandate is discontinued during the semester, students who have an approved exemption and are not fully vaccinated will need to continue to wear a mask indoors and maintain physical distance and faculty may continue to require all students in their class to wear a mask regardless of vaccination status. Students who do not comply with the universal masking requirement may be reported through the Student Conduct process (see General Conduct Report). Faculty may request a supply of masks through their Department Supply Lead as described here.

COVID ABSENCE ACCOMMODATIONS: Any student who indicates that they are experiencing symptoms of illness should not come to class. Please note that Health Services is not able to provide documentation for absence due to routine illness and will resume the practice of notification to the Dean's office for serious illness/injury that requires the student to miss multiple classes. Faculty have the flexibility to decide how best to accommodate student absences through the mechanisms detailed in 8.51.13 of the University Manual. Faculty are not being asked to implement multiple concurrent teaching modalities in their courses but may offer a remote attendance or recorded lecture option if desired and appropriate to the course. Students who request a vaccination exemption understand that they are not entitled to unique accommodations due to COVID illness or quarantine. Faculty are encouraged to clearly outline their class attendance/absence policies on their syllabus.

CLASSROOM HVAC IMPROVEMENTS: URI has been doing HVAC improvements over the past year including increasing air exchange rate and most recently implementing Bipolar Ionization technology to sanitize the air in 63 classrooms across 8 of our older buildings (Ballentine, East, Swan, Washburn, Quinn, White, Fogarty and Chafee). The installation is expected to be completed by the beginning of classes. New buildings, such as Avedisian Hall, Beaupre Center for Chemical and Forensic Science, Fascitelli Center for Advanced Engineering and Bliss Hall do not require improvements as they have high efficiency filters (MERV 13) that provide the same protection for classrooms.

NEWS & EVENTS

- **Rosh Hashanah 2021** – This year Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown on Monday September 6th and ends at sundown on Wednesday September 8th. As a result, both advising day on Sept. 7th, and the first day of classes, on Sept 8th, fall on Rosh Hashanah. It is university policy to excuse, without penalty, absences for religious observance. We encourage faculty to reach out in advance of the start of classes to acknowledge this calendar conflict, inform students if their class will be canceled and if not, remind students to give advance notice if they will be observing the holiday and absent from class.
- **ITS Tech Day, August 25 –** ITS is offering a day of short 30-45 minute sessions on a variety of educational technology topics, visit https://its.uri.edu/tech-day/ for details.
- **ITS Orientation Days –** Come to one of the ITS Orientation Days if you are new to teaching at URI. Visit web.uri.edu/its-training/training/ to see the full training calendar, including drop-in Virtual Service Desk help from 8am to 5pm M-F.
- **Fall 2021 Academic Calendar –** Available here. Classes begin on Wednesday September 8th.
- **New for Fall 2021 2-HR Final Exam Time Blocks** - Starting in Fall 2021 per the URI Faculty Senate, all final exam time blocks will be 2 hours, with 1.5 hours between exam blocks. The final exam schedule is available here.
- **Brightspace Course Shell Availability –** Due to a critical ITS implementation that will address synchronization issues between e-campus and Brightspace, the creation of Fall 2021 course shells will be delayed. Shells will be available no later than August 31st, and possibly as early as August 16th. To prepare your course materials before that date, you can create an empty course shell, prepare your materials there and then simply copy them into the final course shell with your student enrollments. ITS offers two online guides to help: Guide: create a development course in Brightspace , and : import from your development course into your Fall shell . If you need help with this process, attend one of the four weekly TLS Ed Tech Faculty dropin Zoom sessions, and/or to submit a ticket
- **Summer 2021 IDEA results** are available for review - web.uri.edu/provost/idea/.
- **New Advancement for Teaching & Learning (ATL) Website –** Visit the new ATL website to learn about what they have to offer and to access their library of web-based resources, including the ATL Teaching Strategies and Techniques quick links - https://web.uri.edu/atl/teaching/teaching-strategies-techniques/

STUDENT SUPPORT AND SUCCESS

SYLLABUS QUICK TIPS FOR FALL 2021: Please visit web.uri.edu/atl/design/syllabus/ for syllabus resources from our colleagues in the Office of ATL.
- Clearly indicate which technology platforms students will need to use and where to find them
- Have students complete the student Brightspace training and encourage them to complete the AEC Academic Success modules
- Establish class conduct and communication expectations in collaboration with your students, including expectations regarding use of electronic devices in class
- Clearly communicate class attendance/participation expectations
- Communicate options for accommodating illness-related absences
- *Feedback from our students*
    - Some students prefer virtual office hours, consider a mix of virtual and face-to-face office hours
    - Use the course calendar in Brightspace so that students can easily find all due dates and course milestones
    - If appropriate for your course, consider recording your class for later viewing. Students report that they find class recordings to be a helpful study resource.
    - Students also commented that it would be easier if there was more consistency in how faculty set up their classes in Brightspace. If you are using Brightspace for your course, Import a 14-week template to get started (see page 11 of the guide) and create a "start here" video with navigation instructions about where things are in your class site

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. There you will also find people and resources to help.

Disability, Access and Inclusion Services for Students Statement: Your access in this course is important. Please send me your Disabilities, Access and Inclusion (DAI) 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 DAI, please contact them to engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations in the classroom. DAI can be reached by calling: 401-874-2098, visiting: web.uri.edu/disability, or emailing: dai@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 Academic Enhancement Center (AEC) offers face-to-face and online 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 peer consultants offer feedback focused on supporting undergraduate writers at any stage of a writing assignment. The UCS 160 course and one-to-one Academic Skills Consultations offer strategies for improving 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, uri.edu/aec.

- **STEM Tutoring** helps undergraduate students navigate a variety of 100 and 200 level STEM courses and a limited selection of BUS, STA, ECN, and CSC courses. The STEM Tutoring program offers free online and in-person peer tutoring. **Drop-in tutoring** will also be available in the library starting this fall! Students can select **occasional or weekly tutoring appointments** through the TutorTrac system beginning on September 13th, 2021. The TutorTrac application is available through URI Microsoft 365 single sign-on and by visiting aec.uri.edu. More detailed information and instructions can be found at uri.edu/aec/tutoring.

- **Academic Skills Development** resources teach students how to plan work, manage time, and study more effectively. In Fall 2021, Academic Skills Development programs are available both in-person and online. **Academic Consultations** are 30-minute, 1 to 1 appointments that students can schedule on Starfish with Dr. David Hayes to address individual academic needs. **UCS 160: Success in Higher Education** is a one-credit course, open to all undergraduate students, on developing a more effective approach to planning and studying. *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 or contact Dr. Hayes directly at davidhayes@uri.edu.

- **The Undergraduate Writing Center** (in Roosevelt 009) provides peer 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 2021 consultations are available through: 1) 25- or 50-minute **in-person appointments** and **drop-in sessions**, 2) synchronous **online appointments**, and 3) asynchronous **next-day written feedback.** Synchronous appointments hosted by WC Online are video-based, with audio, chat, document-sharing, and live captioning capabilities, to meet a range of accessibility needs. View availability and book online starting Sept. 13, 2021 at uri.mywconline.com. For more information, visit uri.edu/aec/writing.

Graduate Writing Center (for graduate courses): The 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 provides resources for faculty and staff.
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 provides information and support about 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

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.

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 is posted at web.uri.edu/enrollment/final-exam-schedules/). Please note that **s**tarting in Fall 2021 per the URI Faculty Senate, all final exam time blocks will be 2 hours. Students will have a 1.5 hour break exam blocks.

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: 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 other 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 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 classes are over. 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 last day of classes; 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 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, or contact Sean Krueger at, 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.

jvp
c: Academic Deans