To: All Faculty  
From: Abiódún Gòkè-Pariolá, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Date: June 29, 2020  
Re: Follow up to President Hammond’s announcement about fall 2020

I am writing you today as a follow up to President Hammond’s announcement about fall semester 2020 that was distributed Friday, June 26. That message and the new [https://covid.northcentralcollege.edu/](https://covid.northcentralcollege.edu/) website contain a wealth of information about the entire College’s COVID-19 response and plans for fall semester. I want to express my thanks to the 26 faculty members who have been serving on various College IRT teams, and the many others who have provided input, support, and consultation to this effort. My message today is intended to elaborate on aspects of President Hammond’s message that are more specific to faculty and Academic Affairs.

In addition to staff from across the College and undergraduate and graduate student representatives, the COVID-19 Institutional Response Team’s (IRT’s) Academic Team, led by Dr. Diane Anstine, Dean of the School of Business and Entrepreneurship, included eight faculty members. The team divided into two sub groups: Curriculum, that developed plans for instructional modalities, classroom configurations, and instructional technologies; and Calendar, that worked through the complexities of class times, breaks and start and end dates of the semester. In their deliberations, these teams were guided by two key priorities: maintaining our customary exemplary level of instruction and student learning and supporting the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff.

**Instructional Modalities and Technologies and Classroom Configurations**

The Curriculum Sub-team, chaired by Dr. Jennifer Keys, built their recommendations on a foundation of core values characterized by the following considerations:

1. Health and safety;  
2. An engaging, rigorous, and inclusive academic experience;  
3. Meaningful support and mentoring that has lifelong impact;  
4. Academic freedom; and  
5. Mindfulness about faculty workload.

Our goal remains to offer most of our courses in the traditional face-to-face format as planned. Please be assured that the classroom assigned will be equipped with the necessary technological capabilities and configured in a way that facilitates appropriate social distancing. Thus, some classes with large enrollments will need to use a split model where only a portion of students are in attendance on a given day while the rest are engaged via remote learning. The recommended expansion of the repertoire of instructional modalities will appeal to students’ interests, reduce large class sizes, and allow for a better match to an instructor’s needs and skills. Faculty will need to be prepared to pivot to remote instruction in the event of a campus closure or if circumstances warrant self-quarantine. As always, faculty may use their best pedagogical judgment to distribute the roughly 144 hours of workload for a four-credit hour class (the Carnegie standard of about 48 in-class, and 96 out-of-class hours).
**Student Accommodations**

As we prepare for a fall semester that allows a variety of methods for delivering instruction, faculty may need to re-evaluate and modify how they state attendance expectations in their syllabus. To help protect the health of the entire campus community, we are encouraging faculty to be very flexible about attendance during this semester as we anticipate more students with disability accommodations and other students who simply may be reticent to attend class in person, either on individual days or for the entire semester. Students who request accommodations for COVID-19 related reasons will follow a process similar to what those with other accommodations use, but the Accommodation Request form will be modified to include COVID-19 situations and the required supporting documentation may be provided through Dyson and/or a contact tracer. Once students complete this step they will be provided with a Temporary Notice of Accommodation to share with their instructors. Please direct students with questions about this process to Mindy Diaz, Director of Student Disability Services at sds@noctrl.edu.

**Faculty Instructional Modalities**

Thank you for the quick turnaround on the survey to gauge faculty interest in shifting instructional modality for either health or pedagogical reasons. Responses will inform institutional planning for classroom assignments, technology, and faculty training. To ensure students will have time to make individual schedule adjustments in relation to their own personal situations, instructional mode adjustments made for health reasons need to be completed quickly so that schedule changes are finalized no later than July 10. Therefore, faculty members who are requesting to shift their modality from in-person instruction for health reasons should work with the Office of Human Resources early enough to allow us to meet this goal. Course modes will not be changed in the system until this process has been completed.

Department chairs will work with their deans to determine other appropriate instructional modality changes requested by faculty. In doing so, they will carefully review the distribution of departmental offerings to ensure opportunities for students to maintain robust in-person interactions with faculty, as well as a mix of instructional modalities across sections and levels so that our students have a variety of options.

The Team drafted a template to facilitate departmental conversations about classroom and office hour protocols. We are also sharing the executive summary of the student survey of their experience of the transition to remote learning in spring. Please discuss the results with your department colleagues and reflect on how the voices of our students might inform approaches to remote/online instruction in the future, including baseline best practices to bolster student success. You will be receiving additional communication from CAFÉ, ITS, academic services, and the Registrar’s Office.
Academic Calendar

The Calendar Sub-team, chaired by Dr. Peter Barger, considered multiple fall semester calendar scenarios. These included remaining on our normal semester calendar, sliding it earlier or later, shifting to one or two courses at a time, lengthening class sessions to shorten calendar days while maintaining approximately the same total meeting time as our normal semester, and an increase in passing time. We also considered eliminating a fall break, Labor Day as a class holiday and the Wednesday before Thanksgiving as a no class day. Each combination presented tradeoffs. Ultimately the choice coalesced around starting on time, increasing class meeting times to shorten the semester, and eliminating any instructional days after Thanksgiving. Final exams will be conducted remotely, starting the Tuesday after Thanksgiving.

Returning to Campus

The state of Illinois has now moved into Phase 4. This means that faculty will be able to have greater access to their work spaces on campus. Given that this change will impact other areas of campus, including Campus Safety, Facilities, ITS, and others, we are actively working on ensuring everyone is ready for this to be a successful transition. I encourage everyone to become familiar with the Return-to-Campus-Based Work section of the https://covid.northcentralcollege.edu/ website. It contains the guidelines and procedures for faculty and staff to return to campus-based work in a safe and productive manner. Note especially the section on page 3 of the linked Guide: “Before Returning to Campus.” It includes signing a Return to Campus Based Work Expectations Acknowledgement. No later than Monday, July 6, you will be notified of the process by which faculty may gain regular access to their work spaces. Multiple offices (campus safety, operations, human resources, and others) are working this week to get necessary information and processes in place.

If you have further questions, please contact the provost’s office (smrickert@noctrl.edu).

Again, I thank you all for your efforts in the planning effort for fall 2020, and wish you all a healthy and safe summer. I am looking forward to August and the beginning of the academic year.