April 2, 2020

TO: Faculty

FROM: Teresa A. Sullivan
Interim Provost
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

First, let me thank all of you again for your strong efforts to continue teaching during the national emergency caused by the pandemic. You are dealing with worries and concerns about the safety and well-being of your family and yourself, and still being there for your students. I appreciate your resilience and grit with these trying circumstances. This message will be rather long, but it contains important information.

**Summer Online.** Our Summer 2020 Session One and Summer 2020 Full Session courses will be online. Study abroad will not be offered and courses scheduled to be face-to-face, if they are to be offered at all, must be transitioned to online delivery. There may be exceptions for clinical courses in the health science areas, but we are unable to make a decision about that at this time. It seems likely that Summer 2020 Session Two will also be online only, but that decision has not yet been made.

We would like to expand our summer offerings, given that many of our returning students are finding their alternative opportunities have disappeared, and that some of our entering students might choose to enter early. The preference would be to offer high-demand undergraduate courses. If you would be interested in proposing a course, please contact your department chair, school director, or the appropriate associate dean for your college.

On Monday I notified the deans of a new program providing course development support and instructional salary for additional high-demand undergraduate courses.

**Summer academic camps.** Academic camps for high school students will be suspended for Summer 2020 unless they can be moved to virtual offerings.

On-campus programs for undergraduate students are also suspended, including those offered by the Graduate School. For externally funded summer programs (e.g., REU), I recommend that program administrators work closely with their funders to request extensions to allow for deferred programming next year. In these conversations, program leaders should also explore whether current students can defer participation until a later date, and what can be offered in a meaningful manner online or remotely this summer

**Pre-College Programs.** Programs for PreK-12 students, including academic camps for middle and high school students, will be suspended for Summer 2020 unless they can be moved to virtual offerings.

**New Student Orientation.** We will offer this summer’s New Student Orientation (NSO) online in an innovative new format that takes advantage of our rapidly growing online teaching capabilities. Given the uncertainties about travel and the high likelihood that many students will not be able to come to campus for orientation, the NSO is working with colleagues in the Hub and from colleges across campus to create a robust summer orientation course that we will offer to all incoming students. This has been on the drawing board for the last year, and the pandemic has given us the opportunity to move quickly to implement it.
Fall. There is a possibility that the Fall 2020 semester will open online. Even if in-person instruction resumes on campus, it seems certain that entering international students will need to be online only. This is because in addition to the disruption in international travel, the U.S. embassies and consulates abroad are not taking any appointments for visas. There will be a substantial delay for any new student visas. In addition, some returning students with valid visas are likely to have difficulty returning to East Lansing. Especially if your program enrolls large numbers of international students, you need to plan now for how to make instruction available to them.

Tenure clock. Last week the University Committee on Faculty Tenure unanimously approved a proposal to delay by one year the tenure clock for any faculty member due to come up for reappointment/promotion during academic year 2020-2021. This delay recognizes the difficulty that faculty are having completing research and having to shift to remote teaching. It is not necessary to request this delay; it is automatically in effect. Any faculty member may, however, elect to opt out from this delay and proceed with the reappointment or tenure process next year.

Similar provisions will be adopted for other academic staff in probationary positions (e.g., librarians, Academic Specialists, and those in the FRIB Continuing Appointment System).

The reappointment and tenure process for academic year 2019-2020 is nearing its completion and those dossiers were not affected by the pandemic, so we are proceeding with those deliberations.

SIRS Online. An expert committee co-chaired by Ann Austin from the College of Education and Jeff Grabill from the Hub has developed a supplemental questionnaire for the SIRS Online teaching evaluations. The supplemental questions address how the shift to remote learning affected students and their reactions to and suggestions for online learning. This information is being sought to help us improve our offerings.

Not every college or department uses SIRS. Deans and chairs will be sent the link to the Supplemental Evaluation Survey for them to provide to departments or instructors who do not use the SIRS Online system. These instructors could then distribute the link to their students.

Use of Spring 2020 Teaching Evaluations. Given the atypical nature of the semester, I will be instructing deans, department chairs, and faculty advisory committees to consider teaching evaluations for the current semester only if the instructor chooses to have the results considered. Unless the instructor submits the results for consideration, SIRS or other Spring 2020 evaluation instruments will not be assessed for performance evaluations, increases in pay, reappointment, tenure, or promotion.

Proctoring Exams. MSU has contracted with Respondus, a proctoring solution. As part of this solution, students may be recorded while completing exams. Some students have expressed concerns about privacy violations with the recordings.

Please be aware that any recording of students in the classroom, including while taking examinations, becomes an academic record subject to FERPA and is therefore to be treated just as you would treat graded assignments or similar documents—that is, not to be shared with others outside the educational setting. MSU’s FERPA policy can be found at https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s542.
I strongly discourage the use of a proctoring solution that has not been vetted through MSU’s Office of General Counsel. The terms and conditions of these products might include language that would permit uses of our students’ academic records that would violate FERPA.

Thank you again for everything you are doing for our students.