



March 12, 2020

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

Earlier today we informed you that the college will move to remote learning after spring break and continue with that plan through at least April 13. As we near that date, we will be assessing the prospects for returning to in-person instruction, even as we develop alternative plans for how we might finish the semester in case the COVID-19 pandemic remains an enduring threat. In this decision, we are endeavoring to do all we can as citizens to help protect the health of the community. Our actions are largely preventative—to join with other colleges, universities, and organizations to reduce the transmission of the virus in these critical weeks when the rate of infection could escalate if precautionary actions are not taken.

We acknowledge that this shift to remote learning will be a disruption and a challenge. It is certainly not Westmont's preferred form of teaching and learning, so the new formats will stretch us. All of us will need to make mid-semester adjustments to pedagogy and course design. I am hopeful that our past experience of responding to disruptions will be helpful, and I trust that all of us will look for ways that we can share the burdens of those colleagues most affected by this change. This will be a learning experience for all of us, and we will confront new obstacles and discover new remedies as we go. While this message endeavors to address many questions and offer counsel, we know that we will need to be continually sharing more information about resources and remedies over the next several weeks. We commit to doing so.

Resources for Remote Learning

Given the agility and creativity of the faculty, we see no point in prescribing a standard approach to our remote pedagogy and curricular adaptations, but rather we trust your own judgment in determining what best suits the needs of your curricula and your students. We do recognize however, that some of you appreciate an inventory of sample techniques and practices for remote learning. We have created a webpage called "Academic Continuity Resources" that points to a range of resources for teaching remotely. It will be updated as new resources become available.

<https://www.westmont.edu/office-provost/academic-continuity-resources>

We are also organizing various workshops and tutorials over the next ten days to provide opportunities for faculty to get support with a range of tools for online learning. The first will be tomorrow, March 13, from 12:30 to 2:00pm in Founders. The workshop will focus on Canvas and Zoom, although questions about other resources will be welcome.

Online Form for Questions and Suggestions

We know very well that we are entering into an uncertain time and will be needing to navigate through some ambiguities and trials. There will likely be scores of inquiries or concerns that need to be addressed, so we have established an online form where you can submit questions and suggestions. Please use this form as much as possible rather than emailing one of us in the Provost's Office so that we can be sure we don't overlook your questions. We will read submissions regularly and respond to you individually as appropriate. We are also developing a FAQ page linked to the Academic Continuity Resources page.

[Link to form for submitting questions and suggestions](#)

Along with this form, the Provost's Office has set up a Google Doc where faculty can share ideas about remote learning strategies:

[Link to Google Doc](#)

Communication with Students

Our students, no doubt, will have their own apprehensions about this move to remote learning, and all faculty will need to do their best to lay out the roadmap for this adapted journey. To promote clear communication, let me ask you to take the following steps in the immediate future:

- By the end of this weekend (March 15), please email all of the students in each of your courses to identify what their first assignments will be next week and how you plan to engage with them during the week. We are looking here simply for you to give them the information they need in order to be prepared for the course. Even if the expectations for next week do not change from what you have in the syllabus, it will be extremely helpful to the students, both practically and psychologically, if they hear directly from their faculty prior to the start of next week.
- By the middle of next week, please send students an adapted schedule of readings and assignments for the course between March 16 and April 13. This should include information about the remote pedagogy you have chosen for the class.

I understand that some faculty may need some extra time to make the necessary recalibrations in the coursework, and I know that others have been travelling over the break. If necessary, you can wait until Wednesday of next week to resume instruction in a

remote form. Simply notify the students of this change in your weekend message. For those who can start on Monday, they should feel free to do so.

General Guidelines

Class Schedule. Several of you will be relying on asynchronous strategies for teaching, while others will adopt synchronous ones. In many cases, there may be a blend of the two. If you do choose to follow synchronous strategies, we ask that you use the standard class times for the meetings with your students. The class schedule remains essentially in place.

Textbooks. As you craft your new assignments, please keep in mind that not all students will have been able to recover their books after the break. The Student Life Office is making arrangements to ship books and materials to students who are unable to come to campus. You can encourage students to submit their requests for that service through the form on the Student Life page (see below). Since there may be some delay in getting students their material, please consider scanning the readings needed for the first week after break and posting them on Canvas. You may want to take an inventory of how many students have books or access to them, and then identify how you will deal with the exceptions.

Internships. One of the major challenges will be determining how to handle internships. We will be asking faculty internship supervisors to work with students to determine whether they have an essential need to be on campus to complete an internship. We will likely only be able to accommodate a small number of these cases, given the impact of the outbreak. Faculty internship supervisors will receive an email from Patti Hunter by tomorrow morning with more information about contacting their students.

Student Life. The Student Life Office has created an FAQ for students which seeks to address the most common questions and is being updated as new information becomes available. You might want to review that information:

<https://www.westmont.edu/covid-19-student-faqs>

If faculty know of particular students who need to stay on campus, they should encourage the student to fill out Student Life's form requesting that and indicate their need in the appropriate field. Student Life will consult with us if they have questions about requests.

Advising and Registration

Fall 2020 registration will be moved back one week and will begin on April 7. It will still be done through WebAdvisor. As usual, students will be given pre-assigned registration times and will learn of those from the standard email from the Records Office next week. Meetings with your advisees can take place using a method of your choosing (email, phone, video conference, etc.) and advisor clearance can be recorded as usual on WebAdvisor. Please reach out to your advisees to schedule an advising time and let them know your preferred method of communication. The 2020-2021 class schedule is live now and registration instructions will be emailed to students early next week.

It may be helpful to know that juniors will not be required to file their Applications for Degree (AFD) prior to registration, but they should plan to complete those before the end of the semester. Nevertheless, advisors may wish to discuss the applications during advising as they typically do.

This is also a time when advisors may discover that some students are struggling and even considering transferring from Westmont. Advisors or faculty who have these and other concerns about students should continue submitting Care Reports for those students. With this disruption, chances for students feeling neglected by the college may increase, so we would greatly appreciate if you could use the upcoming weeks to make meaningful contact with your advisees.

Meetings

In addition to moving to remote learning modes, we will be shifting some of our meetings to online sessions and cancelling or postponing lectures and forums. Some committees, such as the Faculty Council, the Academic Senate, the Faculty Personnel Committee, and others—have important work to accomplish in the next few weeks, so I will be working with the chairs of the various committees to determine how we will conduct our meetings. Some committees may be cancelling most or all of their meetings. A complete list of those changes will be announced later, but I will highlight a few of the events here:

- The faculty meeting for March 20 will be cancelled. The election of the vice chair of the faculty will be conducted by an electronic vote next week.
- The retirement dinner for Rick Pointer will be postponed. The new date will be announced later.
- Faculty Forums on March 19, March 26, April 2, and April 9 will be cancelled. Some of the speakers for those events may be rescheduled next year.
- The Golden Eagle Banquet on March 31 will be cancelled. The Athletic Department will find another means of honoring the student-athletes who received the awards.
- At this point, events scheduled after April 13 are not cancelled, though we will be continually evaluating whether the period of remote instruction will be extended. Students can continue to prepare for the Spring Research Symposium on April 16, and if that event is cancelled we will adopt a new means for ensuring that their work is eventually displayed and celebrated. We will also continue planning for the Academic Awards Convocation on April 20.

Update on Global Programs

The Westmont in Cairo program will be leaving Egypt in late March and returning directly to the United States. Like the campus, the Westmont in San Francisco program and the Westmont Downtown program will move to remote learning. Many students in third-party global programs have either come home or are in the process of coming home. A few weeks ago we did cancel the Westmont in Singapore program. Other Mayterm travel programs and the fall global education programs have not been cancelled as of this date, though we will continue to monitor the spread of the virus and international travel policies.

Prayer and Perseverance

Finally, we know that this is a time of anxiety and fear for many, and we will all face moments of stress and uncertainty. So pray for one another and for the health of our community—our Westmont community, our Santa Barbara neighbors, and those affected by the virus worldwide. May we trust in the Lord's provision, love, and grace during the trials of the coming weeks. I hope these weeks, for all of their trauma and uncertainty, will be remembered as a time when the Westmont faculty rallied together to support our students and one another.

Gratefully,
Mark Sargent
Provost