NC STATE UNIVERSITY
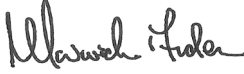
MEMORANDUM

TO: All NC State Instructors of Record, Spring 2020

FROM: Warwick A. Arden
              Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost

SUBJECT: Student Connectivity and Synchronous Participation

DATE: March 22, 2020

Thank you for your perseverance as we all adapt to the demands and stresses of this time. I know that your personal and professional lives have changed dramatically as a result of this pandemic and I appreciate the hard work that each of you has put in to quickly moving your course material online.

This memo addresses two issues that many of our students have expressed concern about as they prepare to resume courses tomorrow:

- Connectivity challenges that make any synchronous online instruction difficult and
- Schedule conflicts due to courses requiring synchronous participation at times outside of the original course schedule.

Connectivity Challenges and Synchronous Instruction

Like you, our students are experiencing unexpected stressors that affect their ability to access their classes synchronously, especially now that most of them are no longer on campus. Challenges I am hearing about from our students include:

- Low-bandwidth internet connectivity (especially in rural areas);
- Sharing a household computer with K-12 age siblings who are also being required to do schoolwork remotely;
- Needing to provide care for younger or older family members while their parents work; and
- Shifts in their work schedules required by their employers.

While I understand that many of you want to encourage attendance for synchronous class sessions, **I ask that you carefully consider how <u>required</u> synchronous sessions may affect students**, particularly for those in situations like the ones described above. Please be as flexible as possible with students who are unable to attend synchronous sessions by also **making your course content available asynchronously.** I also encourage you to consider adjusting your policies requiring synchronous attendance as another way to accommodate these access challenges.

Simple ways to make your synchronous content also available asynchronously include:

- Record and then share your Zoom sessions, etc. for students to download and review as they are able. Consider minimizing video in your recordings, since video takes up a lot of bandwidth, by sharing a powerpoint window or the Zoom whiteboard + audio, which both require less bandwidth.

- For quizzes and exams, give students a window of time when they can do the quiz or exam (e.g. allow them to take the assessment sometime within a 24 hour window).

<u>Challenges with Synchronous Instruction Outside of Original Course Schedules</u>

On a related note, I have heard that some instructors are requiring students' synchronous participation at a time or day that is not aligned with the course's original schedule. This creates serious schedule conflicts for students, including conflicts with other NC State classes. If you schedule a synchronous activity *(again, we encourage minimizing this when possible and making synchronously provided materials also available asynchronously)*, please schedule that activity <u>only</u> for the original class time. Instructors are not permitted to schedule class activities for a different time than what was originally scheduled unless <u>all</u> students in the class agree. If you have students who were originally enrolled in online courses at the start of the semester, I similarly ask that you remain flexible with the timing of their assignments or activities out of respect for their other courses and scheduled activities.

I am aware that there will be things that don't necessarily go smoothly as we all jump into this endeavor together, and I wanted to remind you that if you run into challenges, email learntech@ncsu.edu or call 919.513.7094. The teams in DELTA, Registration and Records, and Faculty Affairs and Faculty Development continue working to help you and our students through this, so please reach out to them as needed. We are constantly adding new information to our academic continuity website, go.ncsu.edu/keepteaching, and I encourage you to check there often for specific tips, tools and strategies.

cc: W. Randolph Woodson, Chancellor
        Duane Larick, Senior Vice Provost, Academic Strategy and Resource Management
        Tom Miller, Senior Vice Provost, Academic Outreach and Entrepreneurship
        Louis Hunt, Senior Vice Provost, Enrollment Management and Services
        Greg Raschke, Senior Vice Provost and Director of Libraries
        Katharine Stewart, Vice Provost, Faculty Affairs
        Marc Hoit, Vice Chancellor, Information Technology
        College Deans
        Academic Department Heads
        Associate Deans for Academic Affairs
        Center and Institute Directors