

Subject: College of Sciences Monday Matters: Teaching during the Pandemic

Date: Sunday, October 18, 2020 at 2:51:03 PM Eastern Daylight Time

From: Dodge, Gail

To: Dodge, Gail

Dear Colleagues:

For most of us, teaching is a very different experience this semester. There are many challenges, including teaching in masks to partially empty classrooms, handling flexible (hybrid) classes with both in-person and remote students, and teaching remotely via zoom. At the brown bag discussion last Tuesday several faculty brought up the fact that many students seem disengaged – they are “attending” class via zoom with their cameras off, not participating, and in some cases not doing homework or taking tests. Although this behavior is not entirely new, there seems to be anecdotal evidence that it is worse this semester. Some faculty described some success in recapturing some of these students by reaching out to offer help. I would like to encourage everyone to do that if possible. I know it is difficult when you have many students.

The University enrollment was up by about 2% this semester compared to last fall, which is phenomenal compared to what we feared. Since ODU’s finances depend very much on enrollment, that was very good news. Our College was essentially flat compared to last fall. There is some indication that some of our increased enrollment came from students who do not intend to stay at ODU. However, we hope we can keep those students by showing them the high quality of our on campus and online instruction, and by demonstrating the caring attitude of our faculty. In other words, to the extent that you are able, please reach out to students when necessary, help them to weather personal problems (family emergencies, requirements to quarantine, etc.) by being flexible with due dates or other reasonable measures.

I have contacted the Student Health Service and ODUcares to ask them to advise students to contact their instructors when they have to be absent from class in addition to the official notice that goes to faculty. Apparently some students had the impression that the University would contact instructors (which does happen) and that therefore they did not have to do that. We still want students to work directly with instructors to arrange for additional help as needed. I actually do not know if all students who must isolate or quarantine end up going through one of these two campus organizations. Please note: you can refer a student who is struggling to ODUcares (oducares@odu.edu), which can direct the student to a broad range of assistance and advice.

Thank you for all that you are doing to help our students be successful, despite the many challenges and stresses you are experiencing in your own life. That helping hand will make a big difference in the lives of our students.

Best Regards,
Gail

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