

June 30, 2020- REVISED Letter to CAHNR Instructors

Dear CAHNR Faculty and Staff involved in undergraduate instruction,

First, let me express my appreciation for your dedication to providing the best possible educational experience for our students. I realize that detailed information regarding teaching at UConn in Fall 2020 has been slow in coming, and what is coming is not always to our liking. This has caused frustration for faculty, staff and students alike. There are many moving parts involved, and almost all of them have new components. I write today to share some items that hopefully will be helpful.

Fall 2020 semester logistics (see : <https://reopen.uconn.edu/> for updates)

- Classes start 8/31/20; Freshmen are prioritized for on campus housing. Students with on-campus housing will come to campus 2 weeks early for quarantine and testing.
- The fall semester now consists of:
 - Classes: Monday, August 31 – Saturday, November 21, 2020 & Monday, November 30 – Monday, December 7, 2020
 - Labor Day Holiday (no classes): Monday, September 7, 2020
 - Thanksgiving Recess: Sunday, November 22 – Sunday, November 29, 2020
 - Reading Days (no classes or assessments): Tuesday, December 8 – Sunday, December 13, 2020 and Thursday, December 17, 2020
 - Final Assessments: Monday, December 14 – Wednesday, December 16, 2020 and Friday, December 18 – Sunday, December 20, 2020
- Students will be encouraged to not leave campus during the semester (eg not to return home on weekends).
- Students will not return to campus after Thanksgiving break.
- Final exams will be administered remotely.
- Be prepared to possibly switch back to distance learning if there is a second COVID 19 surge in the fall and we need to move back to remote teaching/learning/working.
- Faculty should consider top loading essential hands-on learning portions of classes to the early parts of the semester in case there is a second COVID 19 surge.
- CETL will provide some verbiage related to possible course modification for instructors to use in their syllabi as desired.

Specific Teaching Information:

- The University is in the process of re-scheduling rooms to meet reduced capacities based on social distancing safety guidelines for the Fall 2020 semester. Depending on the configuration of each classroom, only approximately 25-30% of the typical student capacity for each room can be accommodated with COVID spacing requirements. There are a very limited number of rooms available for large classes.
- Based on results of the instructor 'requested teaching modality survey', it is expected that ~25% of classes (not including teaching labs, which are still being calculated) will be offered in person, while others will be offered in a variety of distance learning combinations.
- A 'classroom optimizer' application was developed to match instructors requesting in-person instruction with available classrooms meeting the needed COVID capacity. If you have requested in-person instruction, your Department Head may have already contacted you if

changes were required. *Your Department Head will be your primary contact for classroom concerns, and I will work directly with them to present CAHNR needs to the Registrar. Please do not contact the registrar's office directly about classrooms during this transition period.*

- Pre-Covid room allocations and teaching modalities will be removed from Student Administration over the next few days; **don't panic!** If you look in People Soft over the next few days and your course is no longer listed, it probably means that an update is pending. The Registrar's office needs to remove course data in several waves and replace the previously scheduled course information with new information (including teaching format) for Fall 2020. *There has been every effort to maintain the previous class schedule for courses taught in-person or via synchronous distance learning, to maintain the integrity of previously devised student schedules. Look for these to initial changes to be ready around July 6,* although it is expected that modifications will continue to occur throughout the summer. If you are contacted by students in the meantime, please ask them to be patient until the schedule revision has taken place.
- Note: there is a possibility that some classroom availability may open up later in the summer, so please let your Department Head know if you would be interested in switching back to in-person teaching if space became available.

Undergraduate laboratory / experiential class teaching

- Teaching laboratories and experiential learning will be offered in a variety of ways to allow social distancing, including creating smaller sections, platooning (eg portions of the class attend lab physically on alternate days) and a variety of creative distance learning and combo distance/face to face modalities.
- Most of our CAHNR teaching laboratory/experiential learning occurs in Department held spaces.
- A "map" of these rooms/spaces with proposed COVID student capacity and arrangement is under review by your Department Heads to determine accuracy and provide revision as needed. Your Department Head is your primary contact for information and concerns regarding this.
- We must adhere to the safety guidelines for social distancing in our teaching laboratories.
- If this is difficult, other lab options include platooning, adding other distance learning elements to the laboratory teaching, or decreasing the class cap, or possibly adding additional sections of laboratories if this works for you and your faculty/students (*there is no expectation of this, it is just an option*). Please discuss special needs with your Department Head. I have been informed that the safe spacing of students in teaching laboratories (and in classroom) will likely be audited.

Instructor technology needs for lab /experiential teaching

- It will be important to have a learning plan in place for each of your classes and teaching labs. This will help to prioritize key needs to ensure a good outcome, regardless of changing circumstances.
- The University is working on assessing what portable equipment you may need to deliver some of your laboratory content remotely. This will accommodate students who are unable to attend lab/experiential learning due to health issues, quarantine, or if a cessation of face to face learning becomes necessary. CETL and ITS are developing basic "kits" for videorecording of fieldwork and labwork, and will provide training for instructors and graduate assistants for this

standardized equipment. Please let your Department Heads know about your laboratory teaching needs ASAP, if you have not already done so.

- The University will centrally purchase and provide masks for students, staff and faculty, and provide cleaning supplies and instructions for individuals to clean their personal laboratory space.

Guidance on class component site visits and field trips:

It is important that we still offer our hallmark experiential learning, but do it in a COVID safe manner.

Regarding CAHNR undergraduate courses that include site visits to local businesses, farms, greenhouses, etc.: As long as the hosts confirm that they still want the students, and masks/ social distancing are strictly adhered to by all individuals during the entire class, these events can occur. An alternative class activity covering similar material needs to be made available for students who are unable or uncomfortable with the travel to or location of the site visit.

CAHNR vans may be scheduled for use for these trips as long as there are no more than 1 driver and 2 additional people in the van, one student per row of seats and they wear masks at all time. Windows will preferably be open.

Teaching Assistance from CETL

CETL continues to offer updated workshops and individual consultations (<https://ecampus.uconn.edu/keep-teaching/>). They want instructors to know that they are not alone, and will help meet instructors wherever they are to assist in producing top quality courses, regardless of the modality of instruction chosen. We are lucky to have them.

Thanks for bringing your best to our students. I know they appreciate it as much as I do.

My best to you this summer, and in the fall.

Sandy

Sandy Bushmich

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