

## COVID-19 Emergency Remote Instruction Task Force Report

The task force convened on Tuesday, March 3, 2020 in response to students who were voluntarily quarantining off campus in response to Winter Break travel to COVID-19 infected areas. The team was initially charged to work with 12 faculty members who were teaching courses in which students were voluntarily quarantined based on the location of their winter break travel. As COVID-19 impacted higher education institutions in the United States, the Task Force continued to work in response to campus-wide emergency remote instruction and instructional continuity.

**Task Force Membership:** Jacob Hedrick, Steve Jobe, Eric Justice, Reiley Noe, Dan Roberts, Jan Spry, Kevin Stormer, Valerie Young (ex officio Steve Brown, Elsa Conboy)

This report summarizes the activities of the Task Force and the faculty survey and concludes with lessons learned and opportunities for improvement.

**Initial Response:** During the week of March 9-13, prior to announcement of the campus move to fully remote instruction, Valerie Young sent out faculty resource links and Kevin Stormer sent out a Faculty Readiness spreadsheet, which allowed faculty for each course to select *Ready*, *Need Help*, or *Significant Barriers* for each course. Following the campus announcement to move to remote instruction on March 13, the task force used faculty readiness responses to develop outreach, assigning a “point person” to reach out to faculty and provide support. We started with faculty who noted significant barriers or who didn’t respond (16%), then those that said they need help (14%), and then reached out to ready faculty (70%), eventually contacting every faculty member teaching a course.

During March 18-30, the team continued individual outreach to faculty, in anticipation of instructional continuity for the remainder of the semester after the 8 workday preparation period. We collected information from all employees using a Technology At Home survey and coordinated IT loaned equipment for anyone campus-wide who needed hardware. The most common reports of needs included internet access (limited reliable internet or non-existent) and access to laptop or desktop computers at home. IT members worked to address most of these issues, but we suspect that some individuals did not report or addressed issues by purchasing their own equipment before the needs survey was sent out. To combat the quickness of need and lack of ability to purchase equipment, classrooms were stripped of equipment that could be used for remote instruction (webcams, document cameras, headsets, etc.). Based on the survey and individual requests, all equipment needs were met with only minor adaptations (i.e. using a document camera like a webcam).

Remote instruction began March 30, 2020. Task force members conducted email and phone outreach for faculty members. Our goal was to have at least one member of the task force reach every single member of the faculty, individually or via department group email, between March 30-April 10 (the first two weeks of emergency remote instruction). We met regularly to track faculty concerns with technology and support needs.

In the five weeks of emergency remote instruction, our outreach to faculty revealed several trends: 1) once equipment and hardware needs were met, faculty felt more positive that they could finish their courses remotely, 2) there were more concerns about instructional continuity in three areas of the curriculum: lab courses and specialized software courses, hands-on courses (e.g., studio), and courses with live student collaboration (e.g., music). We noted that faculty used both synchronous teaching (i.e., live lectures, discussions) and asynchronous teaching (often through materials posted to the LMS). A majority of the concerns our task

force dealt with involved learning how to use different technologies to post content and interact with students (e.g., using the LMS features, engaging students, giving exams).

### **Examples of Outreach and Support:**

**Materials and Tutorials.** Reiley Noe created 22 sets of instructional screenshots for Moodle and other instructional technology tools, many of which are available on the IT Help pages <https://it.hanover.edu/training-docs.php>

Other software resources including Office products and other non-Moodle resources helpful to remote instruction and remote work are now available on the IT website <https://it.hanover.edu/remote-software.php>

**Personalized outreach and Training.** Members of the task force provided targeted support for members of faculty and staff as they transitioned to remote work. For example, Jan Spry set up countless Zoom sessions for faculty to aid those holding class sessions. Reiley Noe also met with various faculty throughout the period to train them in Moodle features, from basic to sophisticated topics.

### **Technology Issues and Adaptations:**

Big Blue Button (BBB), the Moodle feature that supports live or recorded video presentations, did not work effectively in the first days of remote instruction, due to a trial version of the software on our Moodle server. This caused functionality issues, and some faculty abandoned BBB altogether in favor of Zoom. In the second week of remote instruction, the BBB issue was resolved, but 22 additional Zoom licenses were already purchased. Zoom donated 50 licenses for our use until the end of the semester.

Microsoft Teams was introduced as an alternative to BBB and Zoom, and Teams is part of the Office 365 Suite (no additional cost to our institution). Teams features include email group capabilities, group chat, quick create meetings ("Meet Now"), and the most useful feature, classroom. Teams required more intentional training than Zoom before faculty were ready to use it for remote instruction. Having better integration between Teams and Moodle would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the Teams tool.

**Faculty Survey Summary:** Opened April 30-May 6, 76 responses (~75% response rate for all individuals teaching in Winter 2020), from more than 25 academic departments. 54% tenured, 75% worked from home, most (74%) reported somewhat or very reliable internet.

- Faculty spent more time and effort on teaching during emergency remote instruction.
  - Faculty reported a wide range of preparation hours in transitioning to emergency remote instruction: 13% spent 0-5 hours, 22% spent 6-15 hours, 22% spent 16-20 hours, 17% spent 21-30 hours, and 24% spent over 31 hours preparing.
  - Very few (7%) decreased the amount of weekly time they spent teaching. About a quarter (24%) reported the same weekly time commitment to teaching, and most reported spending more time: 26% reported a 10-25% increase, 24% increased teaching time by 25-50%, and 18% of respondents reported an increase in teaching time of more than 50%.
- Faculty were concerned about student success.
  - Faculty shared concerns that students were less engaged during emergency remote instruction (55% reported that students seemed somewhat or greatly disengaged), that student learning was reduced (71% said student learning was somewhat or greatly reduced; 23% said learning was about the same as previous semesters). Compared to other semesters faculty were concerned for student failure (34% thought students had a higher risk of failure, 47% thought

student risk of failure was unchanged with remote instruction, 19% thought students had a lower risk of failure).

- The emergency remote teaching experience necessitated an expansion in technological capabilities and pedagogical practices.
  - A large majority, 73% reported that, after this experience, they felt moderately (61%) or very effective (12%) at teaching in this environment.
  - Prior to emergency remote teaching, preparedness and confidence in instructional technology and online teaching strategy was widely varied (12% highly prepared, 25% moderately prepared, 27% minimally prepared, 21% moderately unprepared, 15% significantly unprepared). Following several weeks of emergency remote instruction, faculty reported more confidence and preparation (24% highly prepared, 52% moderately prepared, 17% minimally prepared, 5% moderately unprepared, 1% significantly unprepared).
  - Faculty reported that many of the skills they used in remote instruction will be used again (most frequent: using the LMS to post materials and submit student work, digitizing materials, LMS gradebook, using multiple lines of communication with students, LMS quizzing, videoconferencing, recording lectures, and others)
- Faculty reported using blended learning, with a range of synchronous (20% reported that their class time was fully synchronous) and asynchronous methods (28% were fully asynchronous, with no live meetings), and even distributions of faculty using combinations of synchronous and asynchronous components.
- The top five tools deemed most important during emergency remote instruction: Email, Moodle Assignments, Zoom, Moodle Gradebook, and Microsoft PowerPoint.
- When asked about support from the College, overall, faculty felt moderately supported ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ , on a scale of 1 = not supported, 3 = moderately well supported, and 5 = extremely well supported).

#### **Lessons Learned & Opportunities for Improvement:**

- While many faculty combined synchronous and asynchronous approaches, there were shared concerns about student engagement, student access to the internet, and difficulty in transitioning to online learning for students. **Improvement:** All students and faculty must have access to reliable internet, and hardware necessary (webcams) if the future necessitates online instruction. For fully online courses, faculty should set clear expectations for students in regards to which courses include synchronous components, which would be difficult for students with work or family obligations.
- Consistent with research on online and blended learning, faculty spent more time transitioning and teaching courses. **Improvement:** Additional training and support for course design, technology use, and learning management system is necessary for online or hybrid teaching approaches.
- The quick move necessitated faculty to adopt multiple types of technology and modalities (e.g., LMS, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google products), and this may have been an added challenge for students to adapt to several different technologies at once. EAT reports from students verified this evidence. Students struggled to adjust to four different courses using different forms of teaching and technologies. **Improvement:** Integrate all possible learning technologies through the LMS, rather than piecing together (i.e., link Teams videos in to LMS, use Discussion feature of LMS rather than email discussions). Add training documents for recommendations on how to do certain broad level things (i.e. discussion in Moodle, video conference in Teams, etc.)
- Faculty use of desktop computers in their offices presents issues related to mobility and instructional continuity, especially in the case of shelter-at-home requirements. **Improvement:** Faculty need a more

mobile device like a laptop or 2-in-1 (laptop/tablet combo). This is advantageous in a variety of ways. All laptops and 2-in-1s have built in microphones, speakers, and webcams so IT would no longer need to stock or checkout webcams. Faculty wouldn't be confined to their office to work if they didn't have a device at home. Faculty could take their device to the classroom for in-person instruction.

- The remote proctoring software that is currently used on campus, Respondus Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor, do not work with tablets and Chromebooks. Faculty encountered issues when using the test proctoring software on these devices, and some students did not have a webcam (required for Respondus). **Improvement:** investigate whether we can legally run a parallel proctoring software that allows for Chromebooks – an open source proctoring software, or other free or cheap alternatives. Discourage people from relying on tablets or Chromebooks unless we can find an alternative way to proctor their exams remotely.