



KEEP ON TEACHING TOOLKIT™

SchehrStrategies LLC
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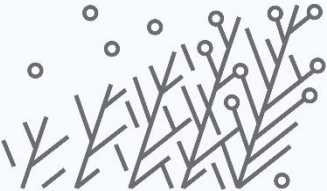


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Cover photo: Schehr, T. (March 2020). Home “recording studio.”
[Keep on Teaching](#)

THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THIS TOOLKIT

In March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic forced many campuses to close and shift to remote teaching and learning, the faculty I worked with were anxious about how they would complete the semester.

I was familiar with the “keep on teaching” concept from my time on the west coast of the United States, where brief campus closures due to natural disasters were not unheard of.

I quickly compiled some fundamental resources and ways of thinking that were aimed at helping faculty complete the spring semester with their students.

When I presented these ideas to the faculty on the eve of the campus closure, I told them I was not asking them to develop online courses, I was just asking them to “keep on teaching” . . . the sense of relief in the room was palpable.

WHY THIS TOOLKIT IS IMPORTANT

While the pandemic's impact was unexpectedly severe and prolonged, it highlighted a crucial need in higher education. Institutions must prepare themselves and their faculty to maintain effective teaching during short-term disruptions that restrict access to campus facilities. These disruptions might include:

- Natural disasters
- Protests
- Public health emergencies
- Other events that raise significant safety concerns

These situations are likely stressful for students and faculty. Campus leadership should recognize this by establishing a mutual understanding of the expectations for educational continuity and equipping faculty with the guidance and knowledge they need to adapt quickly.

Especially during campus closures that may last weeks instead of days, an organized and sustained continuation of

education is important to comply with the U.S. Department of Education's Title IV (Federal Student Aid) policies and keep students' financial aid intact.

While this document is written *to faculty*, institutions can use this Toolkit to initiate or expand on the development of guidance, protocols, policies, etc. to support faculty and students in maintaining focus and momentum toward acquiring course learning outcomes when access to campus facilities is reduced.

What this Toolkit is not and what it is:

This Toolkit is not a compilation of software, applications, or web-based resources—any such collection would quickly become obsolete. Nor is it a guide for the development of fully online or distance learning courses. Rather, it is a set of ways of thinking and proceeding when in-person instruction is interrupted for a brief period of time.

CONSIDER

As you prepare for the transition to remote teaching and learning, there are several things to consider that may impact how you deliver instruction.

- An unexpected campus closure or restriction on access to facilities is likely the result of safety concerns. Threats to safety are stress-inducing events in and of themselves. Disruptions to established routines are also stressful. Therefore, consider the stress you and your students are experiencing and how you might streamline and simplify the teaching and learning experience even as you maintain educational continuity.
- Be mindful that students may be limited in the equipment and services they can access during a campus closure—including computing hardware, software, and internet connectivity. Thus, consider what students can do to “keep on learning” with

minimal personal equipment and unreliable internet access.

- In addition to possible reductions in access to learning tools, students may not have a private space to use as they continue to engage in your course during a campus closure. So, consider student privacy concerns when determining what you will ask of them during this time.
- If a campus closure is announced as lasting a considerable number of weeks, students may leave your institution's city/town. As a result, they may be distributed across numerous time zones. Consider how you will maintain your work-life balance while engaging with students when time zones do not align.

PREPARE

With the aforementioned considerations in mind, prepare what you will deliver and how you will engage students.

Changing course content

outcomes You have designed your course with the intention that by the end of the term, your students will have progressed toward or possess particular bodies of knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions—your course learning outcomes (CLOs).

evidence With those outcomes in mind, you identified ways of assessing the extent to which students have achieved your CLOs.

activities With that evidence of achievement in mind, you designed course content and activities that provide educational opportunities for students to progress toward your CLOs and produce evidence of learning.

Naturally, you engaged in this backward course design with a normal teaching setting in mind. If that has changed and you need to keep on teaching in a non-standard situation, return to the start (the outcomes) and consider if there are alternative ways that students can demonstrate their attainment of those outcomes (the evidence). Even if the demonstration of learning is the same, perhaps there are different ways of delivering content or learning activities that can lead students to the achievement of your CLOs.

The bottom line:

CLOs are the core of your course and you want to avoid changing those. The preservation of CLOs is especially important if your course is a prerequisite to other courses or, otherwise, a key component of a purposefully scaffolded curriculum. How you help students progress toward and demonstrate CLOs can be changed if circumstances require.

Establishing methods of engagement

Select the tool(s) that you will use to:

- communicate with students
- share content with students
- receive submissions of student work
- collaborate with students (and them with each other)

This step in preparation is relatively simple if you are already using your institutionally provided email account and your school's learning management system (LMS).

Email. In most cases, students have an institutional .edu email account, but they may not be regularly checking that account. It is important to let students know if this is your preferred communication tool and your expectations of how often they should be checking email (each morning, each evening, M/W/F, etc.).

LMS. If your institution has an LMS, your course should already be published there. If you actively make use of the various functions of the software, continuity of engagement with students during a campus closure will be fairly seamless. Most learning management systems have features that offer the advantage of delivering your messages to students across multiple platforms, including their .edu email and on the LMS's student app.

Video and Audio Conferencing. There are many video-audio conferencing tools (Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, etc.). In addition to video conferencing, most of these systems facilitate recording video content that can be shared. To reduce the number of accounts and systems that students need to interact with across their various courses, I recommend that you use your institution's preferred video/audio solution.

DELIVER

Now that you have decided if and how you will adjust course content and how you will engage with students, you should deliver an addendum to your syllabus with that information.

The following syllabus elements and sample content, have proven useful in past keep-on-teaching situations.

Syllabus elements and sample content for keep-on-teaching situations

Technology Being Used

- List here the technology tools you will be using, including information on where students should go to download and install apps and/or programs.

Green font in these syllabus elements indicates an instruction or a placeholder for institutional details.

An Important Note: As faculty for this course, I guide you through the course material and answer questions about the *course subject matter*. I am not Tech Support.

- If you are having general technical difficulties, contact **[HELP DESK]**
- If you are having difficulty with **[LMS]**, contact **[APPROPRIATE TECH SUPPORT OFFICE]**
- If you are having difficulty with **[VIDEO CONFERENCING TOOL]**, consult their online support.

A source of anxiety for faculty is that students will expect them to provide technical support when courses are shifted to remote teaching and learning.

This is addressed by setting expectations about responsibilities and providing students with contact information for tech support.

Remote Office Hours and Email Protocol:

- My remote office hours will be held via [VIDEO CONFERENCING TOOL]. I will open a video call and invite questions and discussions in real-time during my regularly scheduled office hours using this link [LINK].

Office hours should be maintained.

This is a simple way to model for students that a campus closure is not “time off” from the educational process.

- 30-hr. Window for Emails & Messages: Monday through Thursday, I will respond to emails and messages sent through [LMS] within 30 hours (usually much faster, but understand that the window is up to 30 hours). You know what is due well in advance; it's your responsibility to stay on schedule and manage your time. Do not wait until the last minute to message me about something due in a few hours or the next day because I may not get back to you before the submission deadline.

Setting this boundary not only checks the expectations of faculty being constantly on-call—thus preserving faculty work-life balance—it also reinforces the importance of students developing good time-management skills.

Instructional Strategies:

For the duration of the campus closure, we will utilize [TECHNOLOGY TOOLS] and [Synchronous/ Asynchronous/ Collaborative] activities.

As faculty, I will play an active role in monitoring student interaction and providing feedback on your work.

Completion of some course activities will be self-paced; however, all assignments have firm deadlines.

The level of detail about instructional strategies may be unnecessary for brief restrictions to campus facilities.

For longer campus closures, however, this level of clarity is useful to set students' expectations and, again, remind them of the shared responsibility for their educational progress.

[LMS] will serve as our course “classroom.” Throughout the campus closure, I will post announcements, files, and documents in [LMS]. You are expected to follow these announcements and posts as you would information in a classroom. Keeping up with information in [LMS] and following the directions there is your attendance.

An Important Note: DO NOT wait for [LMS] notifications to “attend class.” Go on [LMS] at least once before or during our normal class meeting times to ensure you do not miss anything.

Adjusted Course Activities:

List here the adjusted course activities with:

- Rationale
- When and how you will provide instruction related to the activity
- How students should participate (including specific tools such as a discussion board in the LMS)
- Deadline for completion and instructions on how to submit work

The level of detail necessary to describe any adjusted course activities varies based on the type of adjustment being made.

A couple of examples are on the following page.

The key is that these are “adjustments” and not additions.

Students are likely to perceive of additional work that is not clearly connected to the CLOs as “busy work.”

This, in turn, can have a negative impact on their motivation to actively engage in their learning.

Simple example:

Group discussion on the assigned reading ___ will take place online via ___ during our regularly scheduled class meeting on [DATE]. Instead of physically coming to class, please log into ___.

Note: I will issue polls and ask questions during this online discussion. Your participation in those prompts *at the moment* will count as your attendance. If your computer or other device is logged in, but you do not respond to prompts *at the moment* you will be counted as absent.

More complex example:

For weeks ___ your assignment is to ____. This activity is intended to help you advance toward achieving the course learning outcome(s) of _____.

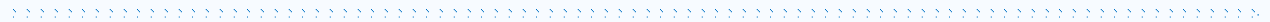
****This new assignment replaces _____ on the original course syllabus. That assignment is not practical given the current lack of access to campus; it is no longer due.****

You can find detailed instructions for this assignment in [LMS]; you should review those instructions as soon as possible but no later than [DATE]. I will be available during my virtual office hours online via [LINK] and at the start of our class session scheduled for [DATE] to answer any questions that you have *after* you review the detailed instructions.

After this introduction/Q&A period, your work on this assignment will be primarily asynchronous. That is, you can work toward completing the assignment at your own pace.

Final work is to be submitted via [LMS]

Due date/time: [DATE/TIME]



If you think portions of the syllabus elements above—such as the email protocol—might be useful to include on your ordinary syllabus, you are right! You may also consider adding some content to your standard syllabus that indicates what students can expect from you and what they should initially do in the event of an unanticipated campus closure.

Example:

While I hope our semester progresses as planned, we have learned from recent events that short-term disruptions to campus access can occur for various reasons such as natural disasters, protests, and public health emergencies.

Should there be an official announcement of closure or restriction to campus access, I will provide preliminary information about how we will proceed via a message on [LMS] and email to your official student account. Unless and until I indicate that things have changed, all assignments and deadlines remain the same and should be submitted on time as indicated on this syllabus.

ENGAGE

Meaningful engagement is key to learning. Engaging students can take different forms including:

- **Asynchronous Engagement** allows you and your students to communicate with each other when it is convenient. In this engagement, you and your students are not together and delays of hours or days between communications sent and received are acceptable.
- **Synchronous Engagement** allows you and your students to communicate in real time. If you use synchronous engagements, they should only be scheduled during your normal class meeting time to avoid conflicts with other courses and/or their planned work/family schedules.

At a minimum, you should directly engage your students once a week via email; messages/discussion prompts in [LMS]; or video conferencing. Whichever method you use—and you can use several in a single course—make sure that students know your expectations regarding their engagement.

You should keep records (data in [LMS], emails, etc.) of your contact with students and their attendance/participation in course activities. This information will prove useful to you in the event of a student grade appeal.

In addition, if your campus closure lasts a substantial number of weeks, this data will be useful to your institution in responding to requests from the U.S. Department of Education related to the continuity of student federal financial aid and from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security related to Visa status for international student.

REMEMBER

Under normal instructional conditions, inclusive and equitable approaches to teaching benefit all students. The same is true in keep-on-teaching situations. During campus closures, consideration should be given to ensuring that students have equitable opportunities to succeed in your course regardless of their improvised learning environment.

Providing your students with meaningful educational experiences during campus disruptions not only helps them progress toward your course learning outcomes; it also models for them the durable skills of creative thinking, openness to experimentation, and adaptability.

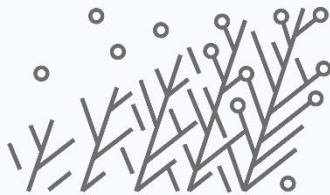
“Good teaching is good teaching”—and that can take many forms.

The suggestions and ways of proceeding offered in this Toolkit should be considered and applied within the context of your institution’s policies and protocols.

COPYWRITE

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