Dear Members of the UMass Boston Community,

Our goal with this message is to provide transparency about academic continuity with regular updates by the Academic Continuity Task Force (ACTF) to the campus community. This week, our major focus is on sharing and gathering information to inform this work.

**Supporting the Development and Delivery of Engaging Remote Courses**

Given that the vast majority of courses will be delivered via remote learning in Fall 2020, we are examining how best to purposely and intentionally use the full range of synchronous and asynchronous tools at our disposal to make remote learning as engaging and rewarding as possible for the diverse needs of students in this academic community. The whole UMass Boston community cares deeply about both ensuring a high-quality educational experience for students as well as providing for the overall health and wellbeing of students and their communities. In order to fulfill our commitments to students, we seek input from the entire campus community in order to develop the strongest and most effective recommendations possible.

**Listening to the Campus Community**

We appreciated the nearly 150 individuals who participated in our first listening session on July 9. We have linked to a document that provides our summary of what we heard and our initial responses to the community.

We continue to invite everyone in the UMass Boston campus community to share questions, thoughts, and concerns about the remote learning experience via email to ACTF@umb.edu. We are especially interested in learning more about your preferences and what challenges you are facing as we move into mostly remote learning in the fall semester, and what resources or great ideas you can share with others in the UMass Boston community to make the academic experience more
satisfying, accessible, and equitable, especially for our students of color and most vulnerable populations.

Here are starter questions, but do not feel restricted to only these. We recognize that you may have multiple roles (or hats that you wear). It would be helpful to the Task Force if you can identify which hat(s) you are wearing in sharing particular ideas, concerns, comments, questions. Please email us at ACTF@umb.edu.

### Instructors (includes faculty, graduate students, undergraduate TAs and learning assistants, subject tutors, etc.) –

- What software (e.g., Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, echo360, VoiceThread, Google Meet), platforms (e.g. Blackboard, Blogs, TEAMS, Google Suite), and applications (e.g., MS Office, MATLAB, SPSS, Adobe Creative Suite) do instructors already use to prepare lessons and to teach?
- As instructors, is there anything you would like to use for remote learning that you or your students need access to? Please share what affordances and drawbacks of such resources might be. Please keep in mind the needs of both students of color and other vulnerable student populations while considering your needs assessment.
- What has worked well for you? What tools or methods would you recommend to your colleagues to support a high quality and engaging remote teaching & learning experience?

### Students (includes everyone who takes courses) –

- In what ways did you access assignments and exams (e.g., phone, tablet/iPad, laptop, Chromebook, desktop computer) while engaged in remote learning this spring an summer?
- Was being able to “see” your classmates important to your participation in class discussion or to your learning? What do you see as the benefits and drawbacks of using a camera during remote learning?
- In some courses, synchronous (in-person/real-time) class meetings can be recorded for later viewing by students who missed class. What do you see as the benefits and drawbacks about video recording a class? Are there strategies that you used, or figured out how to use, during remote learning in the Spring or Summer at UMass Boston that were really helpful, and that you think it would be beneficial for other students to know about? Please explain and/or provide resources to help us compile shared resources for all students.
What tools or strategies did faculty use that were particularly effective in creating an engaging remote learning experience?

**Staff (includes everyone who works to support UMass Boston in any work area) –**

- How has your role in supporting student learning changed during the period of remote modality for the campus?
- What do you need (software, hardware, or Support Services) to be successful this fall as the campus remains remote?
- If you or colleagues have figured out effective remote work strategies that could be useful and beneficial during remote work, please share those to help with compiling shared resources for all staff.

Everyone in our campus community is welcome to provide additional feedback, or insights, that you think will help us improve the academic experience this Fall. Again, please email us at ACTF@umb.edu. We will hold our next listening session from 10 to 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 30.

We are honored to be serving UMass Boston and look forward to keeping you engaged with and informed about our work as it progresses. Please be well, safe, strong, and resolute as we navigate these unprecedented times together and strive to be, both in our planning and our practice, a just, equitable, and inclusive community.

Sincerely,

Joseph B. Berger
Lillian-Yvonne Bertram
Alice S. Carter
Robin Côté
John Duff
Maria H. Ivanova
Rafael Jaen
Keith R. Jones
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