



Academic Continuity During a Campus Closure Using eCollege

The Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has created a [Colleges and Universities Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist](#) which includes: develop and disseminate alternative procedures to assure continuity of instruction (e.g., web-based distance instruction, telephone trees, mailed lessons and assignments, instruction via local radio or television stations) in the event of college/university closures. Instructional Technology and Distance Education (ITDE), with permission from Jane Himmel, Associate Director, for the Center for Learning Enhancement, Assessment, and Redesign (CLEAR) at the University of North Texas, developed the following plan modeled after a similar plan at UNT to address Academic Continuity During a Campus Closure.

Tips for preparing an instructional continuity plan:

- **Start planning early.** It is important that a plan is ready well in advance of a closure.
- **Keep it simple.** Remember that the plan assumes that the campus closure is for a relatively short duration.
- **Know your technical skills.** If you are completely unfamiliar or uncomfortable with a technology, it may not be the best alternative for you to include in your plan.

The Role of ITDE in Academic Continuity Planning - The CDC notes that web-based learning technologies may help institutions to promote self-isolation at home by non-resident faculty, students, and staff. A&M-Commerce supports technologies that offer academic departments a potential solution for keeping in touch with students and continuing course activities during a campus closure.

- **eCollege**, the web-based course management system that allows instructors to communicate with students, post materials, and deliver and receive assignments within a secure, password-protected environment.

Using eCollege as Part of an Instructional Continuity Plan

It is important that faculty members develop a campus closure back-up plan for delivering their courses as early as possible. Each instructor will need to:

- [Request a course section in eCollege](#)
- Become familiar with the basic course management system tools by participating in the Intro to Online Instruction or the Intro to Online Instruction (Refresher) course(s), or by attending a face-to-face training session.
- Identify and organize materials (face-to-face assignments, assessments, etc.) that need to be made available to students online. (It is a good idea to upload those materials in advance.)

- Examine the major assignments, activities, and assessments that would normally take place in the classroom and determine what could be moved online **or** what changes would need to be made to the original course delivery plan.
- Revise current syllabus or develop an alternate syllabus that will reflect the campus closure back-up plan should it need to be implemented.
- Establish a preferred method of communication as well as a procedure for turnaround time on responses from the instructor. Maintaining regular communications with your class during campus closure is a vital element of a continuity plan. Additionally, this information should be placed on your course syllabus.

ITDE is available to consult with faculty and advise on a campus closure back-up plan that will meet their needs and the needs of their students. Please contact online@tamuc.edu or call **903-886-5511** for additional assistance.

Additionally, please refer to the **A&M-Commerce Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plan “Academics”** section that addresses the following:

- Course Credits
 - If the “crisis” comes between semesters, suspend the beginning of classes and readjust the calendar to begin when safe conditions prevail.
 - If the “crisis” comes during the first 12 days of a long term or first 4 days of a summer term, suspend classes and readjust the calendar to begin when safe conditions prevail. At the time that classes begin again, allow time for a full semester (70 days).
 - If the “crisis” comes later in the semester so that only 12 days for a long term (or 4 days for a summer term) are lost at the end, declare it a “full semester” with credit assigned based on the work completed.
 - If the “crisis” comes any time in the long term between the first/last 12 days (or the first/last 4 days of a summer term), suspend classes until safe conditions prevail. Readjust the calendar to begin again when classes resume. This will effectively be a “time out” with course content resuming when classes resume.
- Grades – Options to Consider
 - If students have begun a course and classes are suspended, and students return when classes resume, the grade will be assigned at completion.
 - If students have begun a course and classes are suspended, and students choose not to return, grade options for NG or W will be decided by the AOC Dean in the College providing the course.
 - If the semester must be terminated near the end of classes but before the last/final exams are given, grades may be affected. If this is a catastrophic situation, it may be appropriate for all grades for that semester be reported only as pass/fail rather than letter grades.
- Communication
 - Official course and semester calendar information will be provided via email or any technology that students frequently use (text messages, etc.) For additional information, students will be directed to the TAMU-C home page on the internet.
 - A pre-recorded phone message on all campus phones will direct students (and parents and others) to messages on the TAMU-C home page on the internet.
 - Specific messages concerning any classes will be posted on the University’s Webpage.