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Subject: Spring Semester 2021: Important Updates for MSU Faculty
Date: Tuesday, December 29, 2020 3:28:11 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)



MONTANA
STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of the Provost

Dear MSU Faculty;

Thanks to your valiant efforts in Fall Semester 2020, your students enjoyed remarkable academic accomplishments, even with all of the adaptations that were necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to building on the successes to make Spring Semester 2021 an even better educational experience for everyone involved. To that end, please consider the following information as you prepare for Spring Semester 2021.

Final Examination Week for Spring Semester 2021

As in the fall of 2020, there will be no adjustment to the standard class-section meeting pattern during the last (final) week of spring 2021. The continued need to accommodate social distancing in our learning environment through the spring semester prevents MSU from offering an altered “exam schedule” during the final week of the semester. We ask you to plan for course assessments that are compatible with this scheduling adaptation. In accordance with University policy, the examination period (typically the final week of the semester) is instructional time. It is thus required that some instructional use is made of this period, even if an examination is not given during the scheduled time.

Common Hour Exams for Spring Semester 2021

Common Hour examinations will not be possible this spring semester because of schedule and space constraints, similar to the fall semester. If it is not feasible for you to conduct your examinations during normal class times, please employ alternative methods of learning assessment. The MSU Center for Faculty Excellence provides guidelines and training for best practices in learning assessment.

Course Modality

Thanks to your flexibility in course scheduling, MSU has been able to increase the proportion of course sections taught via in-person modality from 37% in fall 2020 to 53% in spring 2021, with sections in blended modality decreasing from 50% to 33%. We ask all instructors who are offering blended sections to upload detailed descriptions of

how their course sections will be delivered in spring 2021. These descriptions were of great help to students and parents as they considered courses during registration. If you have not yet completed your description, you can still log in at: <https://www.montana.edu/registrar/course-narrative/auth/>.

Student Messaging

Now is an excellent time to join your faculty colleagues in reaching out to students enrolled in your spring 2021 classes. You can help set expectations by reminding them of the “when, where, and how” (c.f. message on course descriptions from the Office of the Provost, Oct. 14, 2020) of your course delivery. It is especially important for instructors delivering sections in the blended modality to let each of your students know, before the start of classes, which days they should be present physically in the scheduled room. You can send an email to your entire class through the *class rolls* website even before your D2L shell is active and available. The site can be accessed here: <http://www.montana.edu/msuinfo/classrolls/>

Health and Safety Protocols for Spring Semester 2021

Montana State University will promote safety, cleaning and social distancing policies as described in the [Montana State University Roadmap Report](#) and as further guided by our local, state and federal public health partners.

Throughout Spring Semester 2021, **MSU will require the use of face coverings and social distancing in classrooms** and all indoor spaces except for individual occupancy in a room or office. The university will continue to operate the symptomatic student testing center and conduct contact tracing of students in coordination with the Gallatin County Health Department.

Spring classes begin Monday, Jan. 11. Messages are being sent to MSU students over the holiday break strongly encouraging them to complete a 10-day, precautionary self-quarantine immediately before returning to campus and to monitor their health daily. Students have been instructed to only return to campus if they are symptom-free throughout that period. If symptoms appear, they are instructed to seek COVID-19 testing and delay their return to MSU. Furthermore, we are asking students to seek testing, if possible, before returning to campus, whether or not they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. And if that test is positive, students are asked to delay their return and isolate as directed by health care professionals. Should a student need to delay their return to campus due to COVID-19, we ask you to please provide remote coursework and support until those students can safely join us in person.

Throughout spring semester, we will continue to evaluate and update our monitoring, testing, contact tracing and vaccination efforts as well as quarantine and isolation protocols as circumstances dictate and resources allow. Montana University System representatives are working with statewide partners on ways to expand Montana’s testing capacity and infrastructure to support additional testing, and if that capacity can be increased, the commissioner’s office will work with MSU and the state’s other

campuses on implementation strategies.

Montana State University has received Centers for Disease Control approval to be a COVID-19 vaccine provider to its students and is making plans for the storage and distribution of the vaccine dependent on federal and state supplies and priorities. Vaccination timetables and progress will play an important role in shaping our approach for the spring, summer and beyond. Neither Montana State University, nor the state's university system at large, has received word yet on the timing of vaccine availability or quantity for the campuses for anything more than front-line health care staff. As is the case with testing, contact tracing and mitigation, MSU will coordinate with the state, OCHE and local public health partners to deploy vaccination strategies that reduce health risks to students and employees.

I extend many thanks to the staff of the MSU Office of the Registrar and to our interim Registrar, Kandi Gresswell, for their hard work and can-do attitudes at managing extensive modifications to our course catalog and student-facing registration systems.

With gratitude for the year concluding and excitement for the year ahead – I wish you all the best and thank you, most sincerely, for everything that you do for MSU.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob".

Dr. Robert L. Mokwa | Executive Vice President and Provost

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