WE PUT STUDENTS FIRST!

December 14, 2022

Dear UAA Faculty,

As we head into our winter break, I want to thank you and wish you all the best for a joyful new year. As you are making your preparations for the spring semester, please refer to the below reminders and general guidance.

SYLLABI

As a kind reminder, all syllabi must include the course student learning outcomes as well as how the final grade will be determined. This practice supports student learning and meets the syllabus requirements in the catalog. You can find further guidance for syllabi on the OAA Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines webpage. See Syllabus Guidance. Please especially be mindful that, if the course includes a fee, you must include the statement, as outlined in the Syllabus Guidance. This keeps UAA in compliance with Board policy.

CORE COMPETENCIES

If your course intentionally contributes to student learning in one of UAA's four core competencies, please include that in your syllabus and in your conversations with your students. "Intercultural fluency" is this year's featured core competency.

Sessions about incorporating "Intercultural fluency" will continue in the spring. The Winter Teaching Academy on January 12 will feature a faculty showcase and a session about using the TILT (Transparency in Learning and Teaching) model to improve assignments. In addition, the Accreditation Core Competency Open Forum will run on Friday, February 10 from 9:00-11:00 a.m. and the annual Assessment Retreat will be held on Thursday, May 11, 9:00-11:00 a.m.

You can register now for the Winter Teaching Academy, for the Open Forum on February 10, and for the Annual Assessment Retreat on May 11.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: BLACKBOARD

For now, UAA will continue to use Blackboard Learn as our primary online course space. Blackboard is the classroom that the University provides for instruction in fully online courses; faculty should use it as the primary place where online instruction occurs. Other/alternative Learning Management Systems are not approved for UAA courses, and could potentially pose security risks. If you use course-level systems such as McGraw-Hill or Pearson, you can set these up to run from inside of the Blackboard system. Because Blackboard is the only official LMS, it is the one that UAA IT Services is able to fully support, both for you and for your students. To learn more about how best to utilize Blackboard, you can start with the Learning Technologies page of the Faculty Success website. If you need assistance in copying a course or cleaning things up for

the spring term, please reach out to the Instructional Design Team or review the suggestions in the end-of-semester guidance for faculty.

DATES AND DEADLINES

UAA once again utilizes a set of regular policies, processes, dates and deadlines for withdrawal, CR/NC, and incompletes.

See the Spring 2023 Dates and Deadlines on the Registrar's website. Note that Add/Drop, Credit/No Credit, and Credit-to-Audit deadlines come quickly, on January 27.

ENGAGEMENT

Whether you are teaching in person or via distance, I want to thank you for your ongoing efforts to engage our students as learners and as people. Meaningful engagement is essential to learning, to feeling connected to the institution, and for successful course completion.

Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI): The U.S. Department of Education requires that all online courses for which students may use Title IV funds (federal financial aid) "ensure that there is regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors." The Department of Education has the authority to review distance learning offerings at colleges and universities that receive federal funds. Please see 34 CFR 600.2 Definitions - Distance Education.

As per my September 9 memo, the Faculty Senate is working on a UAA policy for RSI. For now, UAA is using the following criteria: 1) Initiated by the instructor; 2) Frequent and consistent, no less than weekly; and 3) Academic in nature and focused on the course subject. If you would like assistance with approaches to RSI, Instructional Designers are available to support you, respond to questions, and assist you with implementing a range of approaches to RSI.

INTERNSHIPS, PRACTICA, FIELD STUDY, CLINICALS, ETC.

State Authorization Reporting: Please remember to track out-of-state student placements. All faculty teaching a course, such as for field study, practica, clinicals, etc., are sent guidance and access to a pre-loaded spreadsheet. Faculty notate the number of out-of-state student placements and the states in which the students are/were placed. In the past, this was conducted once a year. However, we are moving to once a semester, to make it more user-friendly for faculty.

Weekly Communication with Students: In my August 15 message to you, I included information about new VA requirements for Practical Training Courses such as internships, practica, field study, and clinicals. In order for students to use VA benefits for these courses, there must be weekly communication between the instructor and the student. This communication can be by way of a meeting, but it can also be asynchronous, as long as it is initiated by the instructor and invites some form of two-way communication between the instructor and student.

EXCEPTIONS

Exceptions to Policy: While UAA has returned to the regular dates and deadlines, please keep in mind that for many, if not most, policies, exceptions for students are possible. There is a policy petition for this on the Registrar's forms website. However, for time-sensitive issues, it is possible in many cases to expedite this process. Please consult with your dean or community campus

director's office if a situation arises where you want to help a student, but are not sure how to go about it.

Incomplete Extensions: Students may request an extension to an incomplete deadline, even if a year has passed. It is an academic decision that the faculty can make with the student and recommend to their dean, who may request an exception through OAA. This can be handled by a simple email from the faculty member that includes the basic information about the course (semester, year, CRN, prefix, number, title), the extension requested and a brief rationale. The dean will review. If they agree, the dean will forward the request along with their support to Academic Affairs at uaa_oaa@alaska.edu.

STUDENT SUCCESS

Navigate (Formerly known as Seawolf Tracks) Progress Reports: In addition to effective teaching, you can contribute to student success by submitting progress reports. Doing so allows advisors and student success staff to conduct early student interventions that encourage students to access resources, communicate with their instructors, and make informed academic decisions. Faculty are asked to submit progress reports in weeks 2-4 and 7-9, particularly for first year, GER, and "gateway" courses that are required for progress in students' degrees. Progress reports can be entered by clicking the URL in each invitation email for progress report submissions addressed to the faculty member. The invitation email will be sent from a member of the student success office and will contain instructions, resources, and the desired submission timeframe. Faculty can also send ad hoc alerts at any time by clicking on "Issue Alert" in Navigate.

Mid-Term Grades: Because UAA has shifted to using the EAB Navigate Progress Reports, mid-term grades generally no longer need to be assigned. A few programs and scholarships require midterm-grade reporting; faculty who need to report mid-term grades for these specific students will be contacted directly.

ASSESSING LEARNING THROUGH QUIZZES AND EXAMINATIONS

Low-Stakes versus High-Stakes Assessments: Please remember that multiple, scaffolded low-stakes assessments can demonstrate student achievement equally as well as a few high-stakes assessments. Low-stakes assessments are proven to be less stressful for learners, and allow them to demonstrate improvement over time. Our Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence has several resources on this topic, if you would like to learn more.

Timing of Quizzes, Examinations, and Other Assessments: If you are teaching courses that meet on specific days and at specific times, you may require scheduled quizzes, examinations, and other assessments. However, these scheduled assessments must be held during a regularly scheduled class session[1], as published in the official class schedule.

If you are teaching an asynchronous distance course that does not meet on specific days and at specific times, you must allow for asynchronous quizzes, examinations, and other assessments. Students selected the asynchronous course in part due to the flexibility offered by asynchronous delivery.

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[1] Exceptions have been granted for certain developmental mathematics courses. Faculty seeking exceptions should work through your Dean.

Approaches to Quizzes, Examinations, and Other Assessments: Quizzes, examinations, and other assessments can be delivered in a range of ways. They may be delivered in class, given via Blackboard, given at the UAA Testing Center (Anchorage, for distance-delivered classes only), administered through Disability Support Services (DSS, Anchorage), at a designated community campus location, or even proctored remotely using software like (but not limited to) RPNow. With the exception of accessibility practices pertaining to students receiving academic accommodations via DSS, no particular approach is required or mandated: select the option that best meets your program requirements, instructional needs, and the needs of your learners. If you would like to review or revise your approach to quizzes or examinations, consider the strategies and resources found under "Adapting Assessments" on the Preparing to Teach Online website or reach out to an Instructional Designer at uaa_design@alaska.edu for more individualized consultation.

In-Person Proctored Examinations: The UAA Testing Center, located in the Consortium Library in Anchorage (LIB 214), is available for students to take proctored exams, whether on the computer or "paper and pencil." In-person proctoring is available at community campus locations, too. Proctoring in the UAA Testing Center and other community campus locations is available *at no charge to the student* for courses taught at any UAA, UAF, or UAS campus. Students are charged for proctoring of non-UA courses. Students needing to sign up for a time at the Anchorage location should do so in advance through this link. Sign up approaches may vary at community campus locations.

Remotely Proctored Examinations: Remote proctoring is possible, but not mandated. This approach can be challenging for students; such systems can increase academic anxiety and there can be substantial challenges associated with having the required technology, too. If remote proctoring is essential to your course, provide your students with a clear picture of the testing experience for your course by familiarizing them with the system you will use and ensuring that they know about the technology tools they will need. Faculty Development and Instructional Support's Testing Resources webpage may be useful in helping you set up quizzes and examinations, prepare for remote proctoring, and think about the low-stakes quizzes or practice tests you should offer to help students become comfortable with the proctoring system, allowing them to feel at ease when their performance on a test really counts.

Communicating Assessment Approaches to Students: In terms of system and technology requirements, be sure you understand and outline the specific details and system requirements in your syllabus, enabling students to arrange for the technology they need to perform well in your course. Unfortunately, Chromebooks, an affordable and popular tool used by many students, are *not* compatible with RPNow, the remote proctoring platform supported through Faculty Development and Instructional Support. If you opt to give quizzes or exams using RPNow, but have students who do not have an RPNow-capable setup (Windows or Mac, recent OS, camera, quiet room free of distractions, etc.), please direct them to the Consortium Library. The Consortium Library has RPNow-designated laptops available for check out, as well as quiet areas and study rooms that may be used for testing. Additional information on technology checkout for students is available on the Consortium Library's website. No matter the assessment method or proctoring approach you select, expectations regarding all requirements for quizzes and exams should be addressed in a clear and complete manner in the syllabus.

Last Day of Class/Final Examinations: All classes that have scheduled meeting days/times, except for some hybrid courses, must meet on the designated last day during final exam week in order that UAA classes can fulfill contact time requirements of our Credit Hour policy. The spring

final exam week schedule is available via the Registrar's website. Inform your students about the date, time, and expectations of the last day of class as part of your overall course schedule. If you are not using the designated time for a final examination, please plan to use that time for a regular class meeting, in order to meet credit hour requirements. If you are not administering an examination, consider taking advantage of this time to debrief the learning that has taken place during the semester, assist students in thinking about what's next for their learning in this area, or encourage other types of student reflections. Any exceptions to the meeting day/time of a final examination must be approved by the provost, through your dean.

Tracking Last Date of Attendance for grades of "NB" or "F": With the increase in online courses, federal auditors are taking a renewed interest in a student's last date of attendance. This is related to how much the institution must return in financial aid. When submitting final grades, faculty are required to report a last date of attendance for all grades of NB or F. If the student never attended or never participated (virtually) in the class, please enter the first day of the semester (8/29/22) and enter a "0" in the class hour column to show zero participation. If the student attended, please enter the date of the student's last known attendance. UAA can be required to provide supplemental documentation in proof of the last date of attendance. Documentation can include things like a submitted assignment, participation in a discussion board, an attendance log, or even documentation from outside Blackboard, such as an assignment or test emailed to the professor, or a quick check in with the instructor. Merely logging in to an online platform is not proof of attendance. If the documentation is in Blackboard, faculty do not need to worry about retaining it. It will be there for one year. If the documentation is outside Blackboard, faculty will need to save it for one year.

Thank you all for your attention to these items, and your dedication to our students. UAA is committed to supporting you, just as you are committed to the students. If you have questions about courses, grading, or need additional information, your dean can provide assistance. You can always reach out to me directly as well (drunge@alaska.edu) with specific questions or for clarification.

Sincerely,

Denise Runge, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs