July 27, 2020

Dear VCSU Campus Students:

As we enter into the final weeks of summer and look ahead to the start of fall semester, we wanted to update you on the planning that we’ve been doing here on campus over the past few months. Faculty and staff have been working on plans to continue delivering high-quality educational experiences while also following the COVID-related safety guidelines from the CDC and World Health Organization.

In order to keep the entire VCSU community as healthy as possible, everyone on campus will be asked to wear facemasks in public areas, wash hands regularly, sanitize work spaces, and monitor personal health. To help everyone maintain good social distancing, all classrooms have reduced capacities, the dining facility will limit seating to 3 people per table, and single dorm rooms are available upon request. We are excited to welcome students back to campus and following these guidelines will allow us to resume as many of the typical campus activities as possible.

We know some students are uncomfortable being on campus or in group settings. Some are at a higher risk of complications if they contract COVID, some are living with or caring for people who are at high risk, and some have other reasons for wanting to reduce their exposure. We want all of our students to have the opportunity to continue their studies, so faculty are offering online-synchronous options for our face-to-face classes. **This means that students may stay enrolled in a class that is scheduled to meet face-to-face, but attend class sessions online from their home.** Students participating synchronously will be able to see and hear the instructor and fellow students thanks to the new cameras and microphones being added to each classroom, and they will be able to participate in discussion in real time through software like Microsoft Teams or Blackboard Collaborate. Faculty are currently completing trainings and working to prepare their courses in a way that will ensure our online-synchronous learners are fully integrated into the conversations and activities that they enjoy most about being in the classroom.

The online-synchronous option will also allow students to stay caught up when they need to miss a class session for other reasons. Student-athletes who are away for competition, students who are tending to family obligations, or students who are temporarily ill can call into that day’s class sessions synchronously and not fall behind. It is important to understand that **students choosing the online-synchronous option, whether for a single class period or the entire semester, are expected to be present in the online class environment at the scheduled time so they can be active participants in that day’s activities.** This is different from our asynchronous online courses which do not require scheduled meeting times.

While we are striving to make these adjustments as seamless as possible for our students, please note that some courses will have unique challenges. In some classes not all students will fit into the classroom at the same time, due to the reduced classroom capacities, so students may be asked to rotate between participating in the classroom and online synchronously throughout the semester. In some lab-based courses, students may need to be present in the classroom at certain times to learn or demonstrate a particular skill that cannot be done online. A faculty member may need to move their entire class to the online-synchronous environment for a period of time and not have any students in the classroom. We know there will be some bumps along the way as we all figure this out together, but we are excited about the flexibility this synchronous structure will provide our students!

Our goals at VCSU this fall are clear: Keep the campus healthy. Provide a high quality, accessible education. And, as much as is reasonably possible, provide a personal, face-to-face experience where students can flourish.

Sincerely,

Dr. Margaret Dahlberg, VPAA

Dr. Katie Woehl, Assistant VPAA

Dr. Kaleen Peterson, Director of Student Academic Services