



## Office of the Provost

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To: NMSU System Faculty

From: Carol Parker, Provost *Carol Parker*

Re: Academic Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic

Today, NMSU announced a two-week spring break for students beginning Monday, March 16. This action was taken to protect the health and safety of NMSU faculty, staff, and students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both online and face-to-face classes will be taking this two-week break.

We are faced with unprecedented circumstances. Because of those circumstances, during Spring Break and especially next week, I am calling on you to work together to meet the educational needs of our students by moving courses to online delivery for the rest of the semester.

Most departments and all colleges have faculty experts in online teaching. I recognize that preexisting online courses could continue from March 16–20, but I am asking that our online experts mentor colleagues with less online experience during these two weeks as they transition their courses to online delivery. I realize the challenge in this request; in addition to changing course delivery methods, I am asking everyone to condense nine weeks of instruction into eight weeks. But we are fortunate to have extraordinary online faculty experts who can share their knowledge and help us achieve this goal. Staff have compiled a starting point of online resources (<https://learning.nmsu.edu/instructional-continuity-covid-19/>).

I regard this as a temporary course delivery strategy that differs from a true online pedagogy, but colleges and their faculty should feel empowered to be creative and use all appropriate strategies and resources available to them, all toward the goal of maintaining instructional objectives.

**We are NOT expecting faculty to suddenly convert their courses to full-blown online delivery methods using modern online delivery and pedagogical standards.** Rather, you should use technologies that:

1. **Facilitate synchronous faculty-student communications**, e.g., Zoom. Zoom is an easy to use web conference technology that should be integrated into Canvas sometime next week. It works reasonably well in an environment of lower bandwidth and is available to all faculty and students through NMSU's enterprise-wide license. Adobe Connect in Canvas is also in place for instructional use.
2. Use of the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) to **distribute/collect materials and assignments, take attendance**, etc.

We recognize that not all material can be easily translated into this format. Therefore, over the next two weeks, we will ask for a plan to deal with classes such as labs, which can be managed to lessen possible virus transmission.

Some other concerns:

- Delayed mid-term exams: For courses that move online, consider using take-home exams or ProctorU (available through Canvas), which supports online proctored testing. For the rest of this semester, students will not be charged a fee for this service if you use the flex scheduling procedure described at <https://learning.nmsu.edu/instructional-continuity-covid-19/>.
- All courses will need to adjust their schedules for the longer spring break. We are also adjusting the course drop deadline to April 2 and delaying the start of Mini-Semester 2 until March 30.
- Finals will still be the week of May 11, and grades will be due on Tuesday, May 19. No decisions regarding commencement have been made at this time.

We will continue to use our official NMSU COVID-19 website to distribute information: <https://wellness.nmsu.edu/coronavirus-2019-ncov/>. Also a hotline call center will be implemented on Monday to answer questions. More information on this hotline call center to come.

We realize that there are substantial challenges to be faced during the remainder of this semester. But we know that our faculty are world class, and we have confidence that you will do your best for our students.