



VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMICS & STUDENT LIFE

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Dear Colleagues,

What seemed almost unimaginable a few months ago—completing a full semester—is now imminent, with the end of the fall term mere days away. I can't thank you all enough for the hard work you have sustained to engage and support your students, patiently accommodating them through their own hardships, and for finding a diversity of creative means to accomplish your learning goals with them. Your efforts have made and will continue make a difference.

As we enter into the winter break, I want to share with you what to expect over the coming weeks and into the start of the spring semester. Undoubtedly on everyone's mind is the rise in coronavirus infections locally, mirroring the surge that is happening nationwide. We are keenly keeping our eye on the local data and continuing to engage with Shelby County Health Department and local government. Our intention remains to convene our spring semester courses as scheduled, and we are encouraged by the recent news about the effectiveness of candidate vaccines. However, as has been the case this semester, all faculty members must be ready to begin their spring classes remotely if the situation deteriorates further in the coming weeks. We have the benefit of a lengthier than normal interterm period with which to recuperate from the sprint that this fall semester has required of us, but please also use this time to ensure that your syllabi and at least the first few sessions of initial course content are available in the Canvas shells for your courses. In the meantime, please be sure to check your CBU email on a regular basis throughout the break for updates and alerts.

As we think ahead to the instructional environment for the spring, here are some other updates to assist you with your planning:

Accommodations

Student accommodation requests for the spring have been steadily coming in to our [Disability Services Office](#), now headed by Sara Nearn in Academic Services. Please know that we are closely monitoring the volume of these requests, especially watching to see whether accommodations are piling up in particular courses or accumulating for particular faculty members. If you have concerns about accommodation requests for your courses, please make these known to your chair/program director and dean so that we can ensure that we're resourcing our ADA obligations appropriately for both you and your students.

Attendance

There has been some concern that the attendance policy has been too vague this semester. To reiterate the expectation, our published attendance policy remains intact. Students may not willfully miss required course contact time and expect absences to be excused. Even during quarantine or isolation due to COVID-19 exposure or infection, course participation is still required even if that participation must occur remotely. My only request is that students not be automatically penalized for missing face-to-face engagements if they are in confirmed quarantine or isolation. Once we begin the semester, we will again need you to enter student attendance for the first three weeks. For online only courses, please identify course milestones (e.g., quizzes, assignments, etc.) to use for attendance tracking.

Training Sessions for Starfish and Degree Works

Our first faculty training on CBU's new retention and student success platform, Starfish, will take place via Webex on December 2 at 12:30 pm. All CBU faculty, full and part time, will need to complete the training as we shift to this resource for early alerts and advising. This first session is interactive, and scheduled for 90 minutes, and we hope most of you will participate on this date. Of course, we also recognize the need for flexibility with schedules, not to mention downtime, and the session will be recorded and made available for asynchronous completion at a later date. [Please register here for Starfish training](#). Be on the lookout for further information about additional Starfish-related training as well as for announcements about advisor training in January/February on the Degree Works upgrade.

Directional Signage

The limited number of students on campus this fall ended up reducing the imperative to follow to the directional signage in our academic buildings. As the spring schedule currently stands, we should expect a modest increase in campus density corresponding with the planned increase in hybrid and traditional format classes. As we approach the beginning of term, we will reiterate the need to follow the traffic patterns at least until we get a sense of the regular traffic volume.

Winter Term

Thanks to the faculty members who have chosen to offer courses during CBU's new winter term. I look forward to hearing about the pros and cons of the format to help us plan for future terms. Although these classes are all remote, the campus remains open to faculty and staff, and the library will have regular weekday hours for our faculty, staff, and on-campus residents. Off-campus winter term students who need to access the library for course work should reach out to the library directly.

Technology

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the valiant work of our CDI team (and ITS colleagues) for assisting all of us with remote and hybrid instruction. It is sobering to imagine where would be without them this semester. Looking to the spring, CDI is already exploring ways to enhance the effectiveness of synchronous and hybrid delivery using technology we acquired this semester. We will also celebrate some of the truly fantastic online courses that have been developed this year.

A few words in closing. This has been an emotionally and physically trying period for our university community. To be sure, there have been some moments to appreciate as well, including getting through two postponed accreditation visits among others. I have especially enjoyed the times we've been able to come together (albeit usually via Webex) to share our experiences and listen to and learn from our colleagues and students. Yet, this has also been an isolating and artificially mediated experience for most of us, and we miss the social support of being together in Lasallian community. Despite our challenges, I hope we can all leave the semester encouraged by what we have been able to accomplish together. I have no illusions that we got it all right or did all things especially well. However, I am convinced that our students noticed your efforts on their behalf, and the impact of your support for them will endure. I hope that once we get past finals and finish grading everyone gets some much needed rest over the next several weeks. You have earned it.

Sincerely and in Lasallian spirit,

Paul Haught

Vice President for Academics