

Subject: Virtual Teaching – T-minus 14 days and counting



Welcome to a new week. It seems our roller coaster is still under construction and the peaceful perspective of a Ferris Wheel is not going to come soon. I personally spent much of the weekend evicting my long departed son (he has been in Santa Barbara for two years now) from his former room and converting the space into a makeshift office amenable to several weeks of cabin-fever inducing work; I suspect others of you were involved in similar last-minute home-office renovations. But that April 6 deadline continues to loom and students will (hopefully) be anxious to return to some new normal on that day.

I would like to thank everyone for filling out the Faculty Needs Survey. We will be finalizing the data today and use it to design training and support for this week (last chance to contribute [here](#)). Some of the key findings:

- Faculty are by and large confident in their ability to deliver courses remotely. We will begin reaching out individually to faculty who expressed concern this week to provide as much support as possible.
- A large majority of you were already planning to teach from home, so the Governor's order should not significantly impact your preparations. We will continue to follow the evolving interpretation of the PAUSE rules while simultaneously reaching out to mitigate the impact on those who wanted/needed to use campus facilities.
- Plans for the "substantive interaction" span the spectrum and will need to be a continuing topic of discussion.
- Advanced training in ZOOM and Panopto were, not surprisingly, most frequently requested. These are coming.

Quick announcements and updates:

- **New York PAUSE:** The full impact of the Governor's order is still not clear. There is likely to be some exception for courses that need access to campus, especially lab or class demo recording. The Provost's office is working with the other Deans to establish some guidelines, and I hear that Universities across the state are pressing the state for more flexibility. Unfortunately, there is no clarity at this moment but I continue to advocate for broader access (with restrictions to mitigate any risk of virus transmission).
- **VPUE's message to students:** Lisa Nishii, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, sent a fairly detailed letter to students on Sunday evening discussing many of the teaching issues (posted [here](#)). Key messages:

- Explicit recognition of the challenges imposed by time zones and disparity in environments (internet access and reliability, space conducive to learning, etc.)
 - “Classes will meet online at their original time to reduce conflicts, but all lectures will be recorded or otherwise posted to accommodate students in alternate time zones. Faculty have been advised to be flexible when scheduling discussion sessions and office hours to ensure that students have opportunities to interact with them and each other regardless of time zone.”
 - **Prelim Exam and Final Exam schedules:** Still in final discussions, but should have clarity today. I anticipate flexibility for scheduling in smaller classes and a shift of prelim dates by 3 weeks to accommodate the extended break.
 - **Impact of S/U on student affiliation and good standing:** If you have any advising questions regarding the students’ S/U option, please talk with your DUS. This has been finalized and they should be able to help with nuanced interpretation.
 - **IT support:** Scott Yoest’s IT support group in the College is ready, willing, and able to help faculty manage even this new twist. All support has to be “virtual” (no in-person contact), but they have numerous tools to make this effective (think managing Cornell Tech).
 - Specific requests can be submitted through the *ticket* system at <https://help.coecis.cornell.edu>. While they may be more overwhelmed than usual, I have found them tremendously responsive and helpful via this system.
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Scheduled Engineering Trainings:

MTEI, ELI and Engineering Leadership have scheduled two joint training sessions to discuss Zoom within the specific engineering environments. It will focus both on advanced features within Zoom and specific tips for teaching on line.

- Wednesday, March 25, 3:00-4:30 pm. (<https://cornell.zoom.us/j/274198263>)
- Thursday, March 26, 5:00-6:30 pm. (<https://cornell.zoom.us/j/874362226>)

Both will be recorded.

Faculty homework for Monday and Tuesday:

The one looming fear in the back of almost everyone’s mind centers around the reliability of the internet to manage the large number of simultaneous on-line activities. This ranges from the stability of our own network connection (through Spectrum or Verizon), the connections in smaller towns and communities where our students live, and the ability of Amazon and others to ramp up to the server demands. As various other institutions come on-line before us, we should start getting anecdotal data on the impacts.

As we should have had class this week, **I'd like to ask everyone to do a mock-run of one lecture on Monday or Tuesday** based on their currently planned delivery model.

- If planning to record and deliver lectures in real-time, ZOOM is probably the best option. If you are planning to pre-record lectures, Panopto has numerous advantages.
 - CTI live webinar on ZOOM today, March 23 at 11:00 AM ([here](#)). Recorded webinar available [here](#).
 - CTI live webinar on Panopto today, March 23 at 2:00 PM ([here](#)). Recorded webinar available [here](#).
- Use your TAs, or a volunteer group of students in your class, as a test audience. Ask them for critical feedback after the lecture.
- Document any network issues that you, or your audience, experience. These may influence your plans moving forward.
- After recording, listen to the full lecture yourself and imagine being a student again; it is humbling, but can help tremendously as you think about your presence in the on-line environment

Request to share data and experiences:

If you are already reaching out to students in your class to identify challenging access problems, or performing intentional network tests, please share the results with me. I will share some in this forum, and summarize others on the Engineering Coronavirus Website to help other faculty anticipate impacts on their courses.

I'm still looking forward to a peaceful ride on the Ferris Wheel – maybe tomorrow.

Stay safe, healthy and sane!

Mike