Dear Colleagues,

We’ve been in quarantine now for over a month, and I have to admit that I’ve had more than my share of ice cream sandwiches in these weeks. You know panda bears eat 12 hours every day, and maybe most of us lean that way during these stay-at-home rules. That’s why they call it a pandemic.

I wrote recently about finishing up your spring courses well, and we can see the end from here coming up fast. It’s time now to pivot to thinking about the fall semester. Although we are intending to have as normal a fall as possible, we must plan for alternatives, which will depend on many factors. Most of those factors will remain undetermined by the time you begin pursuing your summer plans: we might well not know by mid-, or even late, May what adjustments we may need to make for fall term courses. I am reminded of the famous saying, “If I have not seen as far as others, it is because giants were standing on my shoulders.” We’re not able to see well, due to this gigantic virus.... Therefore, it’s prudent to plan now for the possible scenarios – fall courses fully in person, fully remote, or some combination of the two.

In addition to ensuring higher-quality remote courses if needed, planning early will afford four additional benefits. First, it will eliminate the stress associated with quickly moving a face-to-face course to remote delivery. Second, it will make teaching remotely delivered courses far more efficient (as with all planning!). Third it will provide the foundation for a stronger in-person course that leverages educational technologies effectively both to promote more constructive study behaviors outside class time and to replace some lecture with active learning during class time. Finally, if you draw on the extensive support resources existing and in development, planning your course soon will provide you with material useful for documenting your teaching effectiveness effort.

I wanted to learn about conjunctivitis, so I went to the doctor’s web site – it was a site for sore eyes! However it doesn’t substitute for doing a proper job at remote or hybrid course design.

To maximize efficacy in this planning, it’s useful to draw on information gleaned from students and faculty during this semester’s remote learning experiences and on best practices and resources from fully online courses that translate effectively to remote learning. We’ve read responses from literally thousands of our students to a survey on their experiences and have learned that a few key concerns stand out. First, students perceive that many instructors have increased workload in the move from in-person to remote delivery. Also, students are anxious about their ability to succeed in remote courses and often face increased demands to support family members or address other challenges. Finally, they’re eager for interaction with instructors.

Please keep in mind that more substantive engagement, appropriately spaced and sequenced, supports learning far more effectively than a high workload does.

One adjustment we are likely to make when we return to campus is to no longer require long sleeve shirts in the laboratories. The students have a right to bare arms, after all.

I’ve encouraged you to pursue alternate forms of assessment, such as using frequent short quizzes to replace cumulative common exams in large-enrollment courses. It’s worth noting that keeping such quizzes short makes it feasible to require them frequently. A few low-stakes questions thoughtfully placed in relation to reading or other
assignments can prompt students to reflect meaningfully on the material and so deepen conceptual understanding, whereas a high volume of reading or other work can lead to more superficial engagement unlikely to foster a stronger grasp of key concepts, connections, or implications. See our resources for using the science of learning to prompt effective study behaviors and construct a range of research-based assessments of learning.

Soon I’ll send more information on using a Canvas Common Cartridge to promote more efficient, effective course design for both remote and in-person delivery, as well as information on a more extensive set of professional development resources for designing and teaching effective remote courses.

Speaking of folks coming back to campus, I just heard that every year hundreds of students go off to Mime School – never to be heard from again!

Please take advantage of upcoming professional development opportunities to help you finish this semester successfully and begin designing summer courses:

**Thursday, April 23rd from 11 AM-Noon** *(Topic: Exam Proctoring)* [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)  
**Tuesday, April 28th from 1-2 PM** *(Topic: Alternative Assessments)* [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)  
**Thursday, April 30th from 10-11 AM** *(Topic: Alternative Assessments)* [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)  
**Monday, May 4th from 11 AM-Noon** *(Preparing for Summer Session)* [Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

Thank you all again for all you are doing for our students. I hope you’ll forgive me sprinkling in some silliness into today’s note; spring seems to be affecting my mood. I’m also sorry that I don’t have all the answers about how our fall semester will develop; as they say, it’s really hard to predict the future before it actually happens. However maybe it’s best to remember that we shouldn’t try so hard to predict the future – we should create it. Let’s start working to create to a great fall semester experience for all.

- Rick

Rick Miranda  
Provost and Executive Vice President  
Colorado State University