Dear Colleagues,

We’ve made it to Friday. A completely converted distance learning environment has launched at Guttman and across CUNY. I want to take this moment to thank again everyone—all the instructors, all the student services staff, all the IT staff, and all the administrative staff—who pulled together to meet this extraordinarily difficult challenge with grace and good spirits. As we arrive at Friday evening, the new teaching and learning environment seems to be smoothly underway for faculty and students alike.

Students are of course our first priority, and in these circumstances our effort must stay focused on creating and sustaining an optimal environment for them to meet the learning outcomes in our courses. “These circumstances” are of course like nothing any of us have experienced. Everyone in our community will be living with unexpected disruptions and daily trials. For that reason, accommodating students as much as reasonably possible is the most humane approach we can take. Students of course must engage and extend effort. At the same time, exercise flexibility with due dates, make-up exams and other course requirements. For the same reasons, please remember that asynchronous learning is preferable to synchronous course activities. Confer with your students and adjust as necessary, considering their distance learning readiness and accessibility to devices and internet access.

We have set up a strong technical support structure through OAA and the Guttman IT Help Desk. I’m happy to announce now that CUNY has contracted with Blackboard to provide additional support, available from 8pm to 8am on weekdays, and all day and all night on Saturdays and Sunday. Please see a full description of this service for all CUNY faculty, staff, and students here: https://cisweb.cuny.edu/blackboard/AfterHoursSupport-Blackboard-COVID19-Outbreak.pdf. And please share the news with your students and on your course sites.

Thank you again for everything you are doing to sustain academic continuity. Spend time with your loved ones this weekend—either at home or online—and stay safe and healthy.

Best wishes,
Howard

Howard M. Wach, Ph.D.
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Guttman Community College, City University of New York
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