Dear Colleagues,

We are now well into the “new normal” of a completely online environment. The change was sudden and abrupt. We had no adequate time to plan the transition. Our collective adaptation to this emergency has been remarkable. Under tremendous duress, we have sustained institutional continuity in all areas and continued to serve our students. Now, with spring break behind us, we head into the balance of our Spring I session. The last several weeks have been very hard. We can say, with pride, that Guttman is meeting this gravest of challenges.

The depth of the challenge has now become clear. The virus has pried open many of the social, cultural, and economic fissures that afflict our city. With deadly efficiency, it exposes precarious employment, food insecurity, housing burdens, chronic health problems exacerbated by inadequate or absent medical insurance—all the markers of social and racial inequity. All this while literally killing the most vulnerable among us. Many of our students are living inside this crisis every day. We will need to help them through trauma and grief and loss. At the same time, we want to celebrate their courage, their “grace under pressure,” their ability to adapt, to persevere, to continue to study and learn. These will be the conditions now and in the future for Guttman and all higher education institutions that serve the underserved.

We are all aware that distance learning poses its own inequities. We can never assume that all students have sufficient access to technology, to broadband connectivity, to quiet space for study, to dedicated time for synchronous class sessions. All these gaps grow more acute under extreme conditions. Equity in online learning opportunity also includes the need to accommodate disabilities and practice universal course design. With these challenges in mind, and to help faculty build stronger online teaching capacity, we will soon be launching a professional development program to prepare for Spring II classes. More on that very shortly. In the meantime, webinars about equity in online learning are readily available. I’m attaching an email (apologies if you’ve already seen it) with information about one upcoming webinar. Finally, check out this newly live web page, post it prominently on your course sites, include it in your communications, and encourage students to consult it. It’s a beautiful example of how Guttman is collectively responding to our students’ needs: https://guttman.cuny.edu/news/coronavirus-updates/essential-information-for-personal-wellbeing/.

Here is a University policy guidance update:
• **Credit/No Credit Grading Option**—Dean Danny Ambrose will be Guttman’s liaison to the University for implementation and updates on the Spring 2020 Credit/No Credit grading policy. An FAQ document will be posted on the University web site very shortly.

• **Travel Policy**—All non-essential university-related international and domestic travel for students, faculty, and staff is indefinitely suspended at this time. This directive is subject to change depending on COVID-19 developments in the United States and abroad.

The CUNY “Academic Continuity” web page remains the best source for all current University policy guidance: [https://www.cuny.edu/coronavirus/guidance-on-academic-continuity-to-campuses](https://www.cuny.edu/coronavirus/guidance-on-academic-continuity-to-campuses). Again, please don’t hesitate to ask questions as issues emerge. Direct these to Provost@guttman.cuny.edu.

Guttman staff and faculty are showing up—big time. Our students know this, and they are responding. We are enabling them to look past this crisis and build their future. Best wishes to all. Stay safe, healthy, and strong.

Howard

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