

# BOWDOIN COLLEGE

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND DEAN FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

March 19, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I write to update you and provide guidance as you make the transition to remote instruction. Please note, no classes will be held the Monday and Tuesday after Spring Break. Remote teaching and learning will begin Wednesday, March 25.

## **Teaching expectations:**

Many faculty members and instructional staff have asked how to understand the expectations around teaching as we move into this uncharted territory. We recognize that for all faculty this is an extremely challenging situation; this is even more daunting for faculty who are caring for family members (children who are now out of school, for instance). We are also acutely aware that much of what is distinctive and rewarding in a Bowdoin education cannot be replicated remotely.

With that in mind, we want to focus on some core responsibilities and values:

- We must ensure that our seniors can complete their work this semester and graduate on time.
- We also must make certain that our first-year students, sophomores, and juniors can complete their work this semester so they aren't hampered in their progress toward the completion of their degrees.
- We should attend to the integrity of our curriculum, while recognizing the need to adapt to an extraordinary circumstance. To these ends, it is helpful to recall these words from the 2004 Bowdoin Statement on Liberal Education: "The success of a Bowdoin education . . . is a commitment to active intellectual inquiry—to taking independent and multifaceted approaches to solving complex problems; knowing how to ask important and fruitful questions and to pursue answers critically and effectively; sharing in the excitement of discovery and creativity." Our courses from this point forward cannot duplicate what they would have provided in our bricks and mortar classrooms, but we can continue to be guided by these characteristics of a Bowdoin learning experience with an enhanced sense of the fragility of our world and a renewed effort to build a more humane and resilient version of it.

Structural guidelines:

- A semester's worth of credit at Bowdoin depends on 15 weeks of instruction, concluding with a final evaluative assessment.
- The remaining weeks can take many forms that are not necessarily dependent on "live" contact hours. Indeed, given the challenges inherent in synchronous forms of online teaching, we encourage you to focus first and foremost on asynchronous forms of teaching (e.g., recorded lectures, distributed via one of our available platforms),

supplemented with asynchronous conversations and assignments (e.g., asynchronous chats, response papers, etc.).

- If you can manage adding in some synchronous communication with students, that's great. We know that many students crave this, and even informal synchronous conversations with students can be tremendously important to them in these unsettling times. However, given the problems that students may encounter with logging in to a class at specific time (different time zones, a need to care for family members, challenges with internet connectivity, etc.), we strongly encourage you *not* to make synchronous communication central to your class experience, and *not* to make it a requirement for passing the course.
- If connecting "live" with your students is occasionally possible for you, you might consider that to be less an opportunity for the conveyance of course content and more an occasion for community building. Bowdoin students consistently report that their relationships with faculty are perhaps the most fundamental reward of a Bowdoin education. We should all be looking for ways large and small to preserve that central value.

### **Resources and Support:**

Academic Technology and Consulting with close collaboration from the Office of Academic Affairs, the Library and the Baldwin Center for Learning and Teaching has pulled together resources and a plan to support you in preparing to teach remotely. Contact information is at the end of this letter.

#### **Remote Teaching Liaisons for Departments**

Over break, we trained additional staff from information technology (IT) and the Library to increase the number of people who can serve as [liaisons](#) to departments. These colleagues will serve as points of contact to ascertain what help departments may need and create a plan for each faculty member who needs assistance.

#### **Workshops and One-on-One meetings with IT**

Workshops designed to assist faculty in the basics of tools including Blackboard, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom are available. These offerings are available remotely and will span different types of courses (discussion, lecture, performance, labs, language, special software. etc.) A [calendar](#) for sign-up has been posted.

#### **Sustaining a Remote Learning and Teaching Community**

The Baldwin Center for Learning and Teaching, in collaboration with IT (AT&C), will be curating resources on our [Remote Learning and Teaching web page](#) and on a new [public Microsoft Teams site](#) for this work. They will also be hosting small gatherings after the break to provide opportunities for faculty to discuss their experiences in transitioning and delivering their courses.

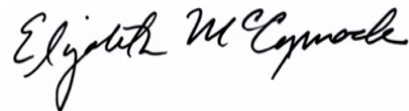
#### **Access to Course Materials and Help for Student and Faculty Research**

[Research Librarians](#) can help you to reconceive assignments that rely on library research so that they are doable in a remote learning environment. The librarians will be available for online research consultations and instruction sessions for your students, to support

students working on independent research projects, and to assist you in your location of electronic resources for your teaching. The Library's [electronic resources](#) include ebooks, ejournals, and streaming video and streaming music. If you need assistance converting course materials into digital formats (e.g., reserve readings, film and other media that are not yet online), please contact Erin Valentino ([evalenti@bowdoin.edu](mailto:evalenti@bowdoin.edu)). A more complete list of library services to support remote teaching and learning is available on the [Library](#) web site.

Thank you for all that you are doing for your students and colleagues as we make this transition. If you need assistance, please ask. Don't go it alone!

All the best,



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