

Dear colleagues and friends,

On behalf of the whole CATL team, I wanted to write to you as we begin this unprecedented journey together. The most important message I can provide today is this: ***you are not alone!*** There is a long list of services and resources at the end of this letter that CATL is providing, and many faculty members have also signed up to offer peer support. We are still a campus community, and we will do this as we do all things: together. Know that we also want to support you as people and as co-workers we care about through this time. Yes, we will help you figure out how to record lectures, but we will also be providing drop-in live webinars and some low-stress but high-engagement virtual programming to offer opportunities to share concerns and just to stay connected to one another.

My second message is this: ***focus on your goals and your teaching – the technology will follow.*** You are good teachers! Think about your strengths as an educator. Is it your connection with students? Your active learning in the classroom? Identify those learning outcomes that are most important to you and the elements of your teaching that are core to them. We can then talk about how you can use technology to achieve them in the best way possible.

Third, as we make this transition to mass “remote learning” or “distance education,” I want to make a plea that as a campus community we make this journey ***anything but remote or distant.*** I have heard from others, and I have felt myself, a profound sadness at times because our students are “gone,” but the fact is, they are ***not*** gone, and all of them (including those who were always fully online) need us more than ever. Think of how your life has changed in the last weeks, days, or even hours – so have theirs, but they likely have fewer resources to cope. Our classes may provide much-needed structure, support, and connection in incredibly stressful times, but they may also add to stress and burdens. For example, is it realistic to expect your students to attend regular, synchronous class sessions on the same schedule as two weeks ago? On the other hand, could you add some optional, rotating, synchronous “drop in” times to provide support and community? Consider these principles in a UNC professor’s (Bayne, 2020) revised syllabus – thinking both of yourself and your students:

1. **Nobody signed up for this.**
2. **The humane option is the best option.**
3. **We cannot just do the same thing online.**
4. **We will foster intellectual nourishment, social connection, and personal accommodation.**
5. **We will remain flexible and adjust to the situation.**

Full document available for use at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-6d_W8rdzE9mW2DvPi-dPvRxo4sekKl3VqEpnu4Dwg/mobilebasic

Fourth, remember what we are doing now is in most cases ***not true, evidence-based online teaching and learning, but it is still critically important.*** Please do not let this experience color your perceptions of distance education and classes that are carefully developed over weeks and months. One professional refers to the current situation as “panic-gogy” (see link below). On the other hand, that does not mean what we are doing is bad – it is an incredibly important service!

NPR: https://www.npr.org/2020/03/19/817885991/panic-gogy-teaching-online-classes-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic?fbclid=IwAR2DMPrgx1UY04qHKZJkmikrCUDUESdeawllr_xtEpi_dkxYKq0GNPUOoqk

Finally, I ask that we realize this is not going to be perfect. Technological and human resources are going to be incredibly strained. We are all stressed, and that will impact our performance; ***self-care is critical right now for the well-being of our students, our colleagues, and ourselves.*** I have been part of this campus community for more than 15 years. What keeps me here is that community – my colleagues and our amazing students. They ***need*** us to be positive in the face of challenges today, not to focus on the technological and other limitations of what we are trying to do and the many things we simply can’t control. We can’t help them if we are too overwhelmed ourselves. If you are frustrated with your teaching or your course, email me (vespiak@uwgb.edu). I can set up a call or Skype session for you to vent (seriously!), provide a listening ear, or problem-solve with you.

My friends, I know we can and will do this together. Very frankly, my greatest concern for you and for our students is your welfare. Please be safe and well, please take care of yourselves personally, and please reach out if I can help.

Warm regards,

Kris Vespia
Interim Director, CATL

List of CATL Services and Related Resources:

- Individual consultations: We are available to assist with your specific issues and concerns. Email CATL@uwgb.edu with your questions or to set up a meeting. We can even “meet” with you in a Blackboard Collaborate Ultra room so we can talk “face to face,” you can share your screen, and you can experience the same technology you can use to talk with your students.
- Live webinars: We will continue live, interactive webinars at 10 am and 1 pm daily for the week of March 23rd. Join and ask us anything! Please use Chrome or Firefox as your browser and link to: <https://us.bbcollab.com/collab/ui/session/guest/b90ea16c762b4f81b3caf1c41f3e8094>
- Recorded webinars: We offered webinars on specific topics the week of March 16th. We recorded them, and you can access them here: <https://www.uwgb.edu/remote/faculty-resources/>
- 24/7 Canvas support: Not sure how to add a discussion in Canvas? Having trouble with the Gradebook? Your first resource can be to call 1-855-652-0700 or [live chat](#)
- Web resources: You have a wealth of online documents and videos to help with alternative delivery. CATL: <https://www.uwgb.edu/remote/faculty-resources/> UW System Keep Teaching: <https://media.uwex.edu/keep-teaching/>
- Peer support: Several instructors have volunteered to provide peer support. If you have an issue you would like to talk through with another instructor (e.g., group work, public presentations), contact us, and we will try to set that up. If you want to volunteer to be a peer support person, email vespiak@uwgb.edu. We will add you to our internal (unpublished) list.
- Course Checklist: Use this [checklist](#) to focus your energy as you re-launch your course
- Canvas module: You can personalize a module we created to communicate key changes about your course and to gather information about how your students’ lives have changed. To import the module into your course, first [log into Canvas](#) and then click [here to link to it in the Canvas Commons](#) (an online repository for Canvas material).
- Resources for coping and well-being: We have developed a website related to stress and coping during this time. Please review it and know it is there to share with your students. See: <https://www.uwgb.edu/coping>
- Sense of community and connection: We hope to host a variety of virtual events to foster community engagement and support. Even if you don’t have a specific question, drop into our live webinars to share ideas with colleagues and just talk about how things are going. Watch for information about our upcoming “coffee klatch” sessions and additional opportunities to connect. And if you have an idea you’d like to us try, please contact us!