

MESSAGE FROM THE PROVOST



Dear Faculty Colleagues,

I remain in awe of what you accomplished in such a short amount of time to keep our students learning and keep knowledge flowing. Without exception, you have stepped up and offered your best. For many of you, this meant you pivoted very quickly to remote teaching, something you were not considering just a few weeks ago. For some, this meant that you provided support to your colleagues as they navigated the virtual instructional environment that you have been teaching in for years. For many, this meant that you created ways to continue your research protocols in consistent and reliable, but, perhaps unconventional ways. Thank you for all the many ways that you are delivering exceptional instruction, research, and service while continuing to care for your students, your colleagues, and your families.

I'm writing today to let you know that, in consultation with and upon recommendation by the Ad Hoc Academic Continuity Planning Group, probationary tenure-track faculty members will be granted the option to extend their probationary period leading to a mandatory tenure review. Given the current campus disruption, probationary faculty may elect to request an automatic one-year extension for academic year 2020-2021. The full policy and procedures can be found [here](#).

Additionally, on Wednesday, March 25, 2020, you received notification from Faculty Senate Chair, Dr. Pam Grimm and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee, of the decision to continue to deploy Student Surveys of Instruction (SSIs) this semester, but that only instructors will receive the results. The full announcement regarding the use of Spring 2020 SSIs can be found [here](#).

The Ad Hoc Academic Continuity Planning Group has also provided recommendations for reasonableness, flexibility, and equity concerning faculty members' continued participation in their service obligations to the university and their profession during this time. In particular, the Academic Continuity Planning Group is calling for prioritized essential work with a focus on student success and processes upon which the university depends. We will adopt these recommendations (see the full recommendations [here](#)) and require a holistic approach when evaluating faculty in performing their service responsibilities.

All of these actions are taken to help alleviate some of the stress that many of you may be feeling. I am keenly aware of how much of your time is necessarily going into teaching and communicating with students, and how disruptive our current circumstances are to the continuity of your teaching, research, and service goals. It is my hope, and the hope of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee and the Academic Continuity Planning Group, that these actions allow you to move forward with a little less stress as we push through the last few weeks of the spring semester.

As I close, I want to remind you of a few options we are allowing students to choose, as they, too, navigate these very challenging times. Last Friday, March 20th, I informed you that [students would be able to take many courses as Pass/Fail](#) and also that we would extend the student withdrawal deadline to April 28th. We will also share additional information with students about how to consider and choose these options at <https://www.kent.edu/coronavirus/grading>. Remember that if your course allows the Pass/Fail option, you will still submit the letter grade earned by each student and it is the student's choice to then choose the Pass/Fail option.

In addition, I also want you to be aware that some students who may have withdrawn from your class between March 10th and April 1st may now be returning to class. We felt it was important to make the option to re-engage available to those students upon instituting the Pass/Fail option. We have asked students to reach out to instructors if they previously withdrew and are now re-enrolling by April 1st. These students will have missed course material and potentially some assignments. I know you will be flexible and work with these students to help them succeed. Thank you.

I know you are doing a lot under extremely challenging situations. Yet, I know you continue to reach out often to your students to support them and to reassure them that they will get through the semester and that you will be there to help them. I know this is true because students are sending me emails telling me so. I see posts on social media from parents that describe how you are going above and beyond to help their student. I hear from your colleagues about the creative ways you are finding to teach and engage with your students. I can't find strong enough words to tell you how much I appreciate and value you, and how thankful I am for your care and concern for your students and your colleagues.

Thank you. Thank you for all you do...for all you do all the time, but especially in these unprecedented times.

Please take care of yourselves and reach out to your colleagues to take care of one another. **Flashes Take Care of Flashes**, indeed.

Stay healthy!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melody". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a stylized "y" that loops back.

Melody Tankersley
Interim Senior Vice President and Provost
Kent State University