Dear Faculty Colleagues,

Today marks one full month of completely remote and online instruction at Kent State. In some ways, it feels like yesterday. In other ways, it feels like it’s been 8 months. However long it may seem to you, I hope each day brings you unexpected joys and renewed strength. You have my sincere appreciation and admiration for all that you are doing during the COVID-19 pandemic. I know you continue to do your excellent work while dealing with the many challenges that working from home brings. I am so very grateful for you and for your care of our students.

As you may recall from my message on March 27th, the ad-hoc Academic Continuity Committee has been working nonstop to create temporary policies, procedures, and guidelines in Academic Affairs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All approved documents and language are located on the Academic Affairs Response to COVID-19 website which will continue to be updated as the work of the ad hoc Academic Continuity Committee continues.

Although several of these temporary policies, procedures, and guidelines have been previously communicated to you (e.g., revised grading options and deadlines for Spring 2020, use of Student Survey of Instruction guidelines, minimum expectations for remote course delivery, tolling guidelines for faculty), I want to highlight several recently approved temporary policies, procedures and guidelines.

The ad hoc Academic Continuity Committee has considered the impact of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on student academic standing. This disruption, including the change to remote delivery, has potentially had a significant negative impact on the academic standing of undergraduate and graduate students. Therefore, academic dismissals and academic probation for Spring 2020 will be suspended. In addition, extended time-limits and extended conditional admission for graduate students, as well as broadened eligibility criteria for graduate student leave of absence will be implemented. You can read more about these changes related to student academic standing here.

Final examinations are upon us and they can take various formats, including a final paper or student presentation. The ad hoc Academic Continuity Committee considered the new teaching and learning environment we are currently in and provided guidelines for you. If you are changing the nature of the final examination in your course, please ensure that (a) all students are well informed
about the changes through a revised syllabus, and (b) the change is not negatively affecting any students in the class. If the change could affect some students negatively, consider an alternative arrangement for those students affected. Where there are specific academic unit guidelines regarding the format for final examinations, the department chair/school director will inform all instructors of those guidelines.

**If you are giving a synchronous final exam during final exam week, this exam should occur only at the time the exam is scheduled.** Find more information about final examinations for Spring 2020 [here](#) and the Spring 2020 final exam schedule [here](#). Contact each regional campus for their final examination schedule.

Earlier in the Spring 2020 Semester, I provided guidance for instructors to be flexible in requesting documentation for a student absence when students are ill. Due to COVID-19, most health care facilities will not see patients for mild illnesses, so obtaining documentation is not possible. I continue to ask you to be flexible in requesting documentation around student absences when a student is ill and also apply that same flexibility in other academic situations. For example, when students request an incomplete for extenuating circumstances, the usual process requires similar documentation. Please know that appropriate documentation is at the discretion of the instructor and academic unit, and an email from the student or the student’s caregiver may be sufficient in most situations. I also ask, as guided by the recommendations from the ad hoc Academic Continuity Committee, that you provide flexibility for students who may have taken on additional caregiving responsibilities as this may also affect their coursework.

As with students, it is possible that some of you may experience disruptions during this COVID-19 pandemic. The ad hoc Academic Continuity Committee has considered the impact of instructor absences with a focus on issues critical to the continued academic progress of our students and the success of our faculty. The group is especially concerned about the challenges that academic units may face when instructors’ health concerns, or those of their families, prevent instructors from performing their instructional responsibilities. See the guidelines [here](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic may also disrupt current (Spring 2020) and planned (AY 2020-21) Faculty Professional Improvement Leave (FPIL) for some of you. The ad hoc Academic Continuity Committee created guidelines for faculty and administrators to consider if a FPIL has been or will be impacted by this disruption. See the guidelines [here](#).

Wow. It’s been quite a month. I hope you and yours are doing well—staying healthy and strong. We share concern for the health and well-being of our families, loved ones, and our broader communities. And so many of us are caring for children and elder family members and others who may need special attention. If you are feeling stress and anxiety and need support during this time, please reach out to Kent State University’s Employee Assistance Program, IMPACT, at 1-800-227-6007, for live, immediate assistance.
I am grateful for the countless ways you all have risen to this extraordinary challenge, with your unwavering patience, understanding, and spirit of solidarity. I am fortunate to be part of such a dedicated and caring community. Let’s continue to support and show appreciation to each other as we guide our students to the end of a successful semester.

All my best,

Melody Tankersley
Interim Senior Vice President and Provost
Kent State University