EVALUATING REQUESTS FOR REMOTE INSTRUCTION

AGENDA

• Discuss student requests we are getting
• Discuss faculty/department decisions concerning impact on learning and classroom/course management
• Discuss remote instruction requests as it relates to tests
• Discuss administration’s decisions concerning remote instruction
• Discuss AHEAD’s guidance on consideration and best practices

REQUESTS COMING IN, IDENTIFIED DURING COVID PANDEMIC (AND, HONESTLY, BEFORE THEN TOO)

Requests in the past:
• Chronic health conditions
• Treatments and after-effects of treatments
• Compromised immunity
• Often denied because it was considered “unreasonable” or an “undue burden”

Current requests:
• Same as in the past
• Anxiety related to contaminations and dangers associated with COVID
• Options were set up for students isolating and quarantining due to COVID, so approvals were arranged

Potential Requests:
• Same as current, particularly as it relates to long-COVID
• Flexibility is more apparent (now that it’s been done)
• There is no putting the toothpaste back in the tube
FROM ONE STUDENT --

“So even though I have been able to have the remote learning accommodations because of COVID, I have been having a rather rough time with my ulcerative colitis and I really don’t know if I would have been able to do as well this semester without it. Making it to class sometimes would have been physically impossible.

“I feel that I am actually kind of lucky attending college during the pandemic, which has allowed these exceptions to be made for students. I fear that after this particular period of time, the university will forget about the struggles people like me have even without the threat of severe illness from COVID. The whole reason I was originally forced to drop out of college a couple of years ago was due to the fact that I could not make it to campus and attend classes because of the onset of my UC.”

FACULTY/DEPARTMENT CONCERNS REGARDING REMOTE INSTRUCTION

• Some courses are designed with single locations in mind
• Faculty may need to rethink how material is shared in a learning environment
• Some courses do not lend themselves well to online environments, much less remote instruction ones
  • Art studio class – who has a kiln at home?
  • Art Ed class – teaching students to build their own materials then interacting with others and the materials they also created on site
• Group work, collaboration, and feedback

WHAT ABOUT TESTS WHEN A STUDENT IS APPROVED FOR REMOTE INSTRUCTION?

• Test security a big concern
• Remote proctoring is extremely flawed (and biased against folks with darker skin tones or those who gaze around a room when focusing and contemplating)
• Is remote testing fundamentally altering the experience? Does it compromise the course objectives/standards?
• Can we insist a student take a proctored exam in a space with fewer individuals? Does that provide equal access/opportunity? Does it create an unnecessary barrier?
ADMINISTRATION’S CONCERNS WITH REMOTE INSTRUCTION

- Expenses related to setting up techie rooms (cameras, microphones, equipment)
- Distance learning has existed for decades and is already set-up in some courses
- If students aren’t on campus, they aren’t spending money – loss of revenue
- “Tradition” – Worst. Excuse. Ever. (Great song in Fiddler on the Roof, thought)

AHEAD’S GUIDANCE FOR CONSIDERATION

- Absolutely no absolutes anymore.
- Blanketly, there are no blanket “no’s.”
- Create a process for considering all requests, ask the questions, in a way, force faculty to assess why they are teaching the ways in which they are.
- Determine a list of points that need to be considered or concerns that need to be addressed.
- Each case is different, so is each request.
- Focus on the course requirements, not the student. Take them out of the equation when gathering information and discussing with faculty.

BEST PRACTICES FOR FUTURE

- Encourage flexibility in course design
  - Options for remote/online coursework
- Toot the experiences from students who excelled in largely-remote environments thanks to Universal Design concepts that were implemented
  - Disability-related
  - Familial-obligations (care-taking roles)
  - Help faculty understand the limitations of the “we’ve always done it like this” approach
ASK US ANYTHING!

• What are some scenarios you’ve encountered and need to talk through?
• What guidance do you need?
• What information do you need to take back to your admin?
• What has been faculty reaction to these (not new to us) requests?
• What if a student approved for remote instruction as a student is also working as a TA?

Thank you for your attention and participation!
Jamie Axelrod – jaxelrod@nau.edu
Sheryl Killen – skiller@cscc.edu
Jennifer Murchison – jlmurchis@memphis.edu
Danny Nuss – dnnuss@pacific.edu