

## ***WE PUT STUDENTS FIRST!***

August 16, 2023

Dear UAA Faculty,

I'm excited to welcome each of you back to our UAA campuses for Fall 2023, and I look forward to working together to transform the lives of our students, our communities, and our larger world through teaching, research, and public service. As you are making your preparations for the fall semester, please refer to the below reminders and general guidance; keep in mind that you can always reach out to your Dean or Campus Director if you have questions or need support.

### **SYLLABI**

As a kind reminder, all syllabi must include the course student learning outcomes as well as how the final grade will be determined. It should also list a description of the course content, policies within the course, and procedures that govern the delivery of the course. This practice supports student learning and meets the [syllabus and course procedures](#) in the catalog. For further guidance, see [Syllabus Guidance](#) posted on the OAA website. Please especially be mindful that, if the course includes a fee, you must include the statement, as outlined in the Syllabus Guidance. This keeps UAA in compliance with Board policy.

**A special note for faculty teaching fully asynchronous online (e.g., no set meeting day or time) courses:** per UAA's policy in compliance with Federal regulation regarding Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI), your syllabus must also contain explicit description of how your course meets the requirements of RSI. Please see more information below in the section titled "Engagement."

### **CORE COMPETENCIES**

If your course intentionally contributes to student learning in one of UAA's four [core competencies](#), please include that in your syllabus, assignments, and in your conversations with your students. "Creative and Critical Thinking" is this year's featured core competency.

Sessions about incorporating "Creative and Critical Thinking" will be offered at the Fall Teaching Academy on August 21 and throughout the year.

### **LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: BLACKBOARD AND ULTRA**

Blackboard Learn is UAA's only approved and fully supported online course space. Blackboard is the classroom that the University provides for instruction in fully online courses; faculty should use it as the primary place where online instruction occurs. Other/alternative Learning Management Systems are not approved for UAA courses, and could potentially pose security risks. If you use course-level systems or enhanced e-texts such as McGraw-Hill or Pearson, you can set these up to run from inside of the Blackboard system. To learn more about how best to utilize Blackboard, start with the [Learning Technologies](#) page of the Faculty Success website. If

you need assistance in copying a course or cleaning things up for the fall term, please reach out to the Instructional Design Team ([uaa\\_design@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa_design@alaska.edu)) or review the suggestions in the [start of semester checklist](#). Updating to Blackboard Ultra is happening in targeted pilots this fall. For information about other LMS decisions and timelines, please contact your Dean or Campus Director.

## **DATES AND DEADLINES**

UAA utilizes a set of regular policies, processes, dates and deadlines for withdrawal, CR/NC, and incompletes. See the Fall 2023 Dates and Deadlines on the [Registrar's website](#). Note that Add/Drop, Credit/No Credit, and Credit-to-Audit deadlines come quickly, on September 8.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

Whether you are teaching in person or via distance, I want to thank you for your ongoing efforts to engage our students as learners and as people. Meaningful engagement is essential to learning, to feeling connected to the institution, and for successful course completion.

**Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI):** The U.S. Department of Education requires that all online courses for which students may use Title IV funds (federal financial aid) “ensure that there is regular and substantive interaction between students and instructors.” The Department of Education has the authority to review distance learning offerings at colleges and universities that receive federal funds. Please see [34 CFR 600.2 Definitions - Distance Education](#).

Last year the Faculty Senate put forward a resolution that faculty include their approach to RSI in the syllabus. Information about RSI, syllabus statements, and best practices for meeting RSI is available on the [Faculty Development and Instructional Support website](#). If you would like assistance with approaches that meet RSI, [Instructional Designers](#) are available to support you, respond to questions, and assist you with implementing a range of approaches to RSI. Watch for two sessions on RSI at the Fall Teaching Academy on August 21.

## **INTERNSHIPS, PRACTICA, FIELD STUDY, CLINICALS, ETC.**

**State Authorization Reporting:** Please remember to track out-of-state student placements. All faculty teaching a course, such as for field study, practica, clinicals, etc., are sent guidance and access to a pre-loaded spreadsheet. Faculty notate the number of out-of-state student placements and the states in which the students are/were placed. In the past, this was conducted once a year. However, we are moving to once a semester, to make it more user-friendly for faculty.

**Weekly Communication with Students:** In compliance with updated VA requirements for Practical Training Courses such as internships, practica, field study, and clinicals, there must be weekly communication between the instructor and the student. This communication can be by way of a meeting, but it can also be asynchronous, as long as it is initiated by the instructor and invites some form of two-way communication between the instructor and student.

## **EXCEPTIONS**

**Exceptions to Policy:** While UAA has returned to the regular dates and deadlines, please keep in mind that for many, if not most, policies, exceptions for students are possible. There is a policy petition for this on the Registrar's forms website. However, for time-sensitive issues, it is possible

in many cases to expedite this process. Please consult with your Dean or Community Campus Director's office if a situation arises where you want to help a student, but are not sure how to go about it.

**Incomplete Extensions:** Students may request an extension to an incomplete deadline, even if a year has passed. It is an academic decision that the faculty can make with the student and recommend to their Dean, who may request an exception through OAA. This can be handled by a simple email from the faculty member that includes the basic information about the course (semester, year, CRN, prefix, number, title), the extension requested and a brief rationale. The Dean will review. If they agree, the Dean will forward the request along with their support to Academic Affairs at [uaa\\_oaa@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa_oaa@alaska.edu).

## STUDENT SUCCESS

**NEW FOR THIS FALL: Navigate Progress Report Schedule:** In addition to effective teaching, you can contribute to student success by submitting progress reports. Doing so allows advisors and student success staff to conduct early student interventions that encourage students to access resources, communicate with their instructors, and make informed academic decisions. **Tier 1 GER faculty are asked to submit progress reports in Weeks 1 and 2** focusing on student attendance, online engagement, and/or concerns about students' access to technology. **All faculty are asked to submit progress reports Weeks 4-6 focusing on academic performance, as well as progress reports Weeks 7-9** for catching students at risk of failing. Progress Reports for first year students, GER, and "gateway" courses that are required for progress in students' degrees are particularly important. Progress reports can be entered by clicking the URL in each invitation email for progress report submissions addressed to the faculty member. The invitation email will be sent from a member of the student success office and will contain instructions, resources, and the desired submission timeframe. Faculty can also send ad hoc alerts at any time by clicking on "Issue Alert" in Navigate.

## ASSESSING LEARNING THROUGH QUIZZES AND EXAMINATIONS

**Low-Stakes versus High-Stakes Assessments:** Please remember that multiple, scaffolded low-stakes assessments can demonstrate student achievement equally as well as a few high-stakes assessments. Low-stakes assessments are proven to be less stressful for learners, and allow them to demonstrate improvement over time. Our [Center for Advancing Faculty Excellence](#) has several resources on this topic, if you would like to learn more.

**Timing of Quizzes, Examinations, and Other Assessments:** If you are teaching courses that meet on specific days and at specific times, you may require scheduled quizzes, examinations, and other assessments. However, these scheduled assessments must be held during a regularly scheduled class session<sup>1</sup>, as published in the official class schedule.

If you are teaching an asynchronous distance course that does not meet on specific days and at specific times, you must allow for asynchronous quizzes, examinations, and other assessments. Students selected the asynchronous course in part due to the flexibility offered by asynchronous delivery.

---

<sup>1</sup> Exceptions have been granted for certain developmental mathematics courses. Faculty seeking exceptions should work through your Dean.

**Approaches to Quizzes, Examinations, and Other Assessments:** Quizzes, examinations, and other assessments can be delivered in a range of ways. They may be delivered in class, given via Blackboard, given at the UAA Testing Center (Anchorage, for online-delivered classes only), administered through Disability Support Services (DSS, Anchorage), at a designated community campus location, or proctored remotely using software like (but not limited to) RPNOW. With the exception of accessibility practices pertaining to students receiving academic accommodations via DSS, no particular approach is required or mandated: select the option that best meets your program requirements, instructional needs, and the needs of your learners. If you would like to review or revise your approach to quizzes or examinations, consider the [strategies and resources](#) found under “Adapting Assessments” on the [Preparing to Teach Online](#) website or reach out to an Instructional Designer at [uaa\\_design@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa_design@alaska.edu) for more individualized consultation.

**In-Person Proctored Examinations:** The [UAA Testing Center](#), located in the Consortium Library in Anchorage (LIB 215), is available for students to take proctored exams, whether on the computer or “paper and pencil.” In-person proctoring is available at community campus locations, too. Proctoring in the UAA Testing Center and other community campus locations is available *at no charge to the student* for courses taught at any UAA, UAF, or UAS campus. Students are charged for proctoring of non-UA courses. Students needing to [sign up for a time at the Anchorage location should do so in advance through this link](#). Sign up approaches may vary at community campus locations.

**Remotely Proctored Examinations:** Remote proctoring is possible for online courses or to meet academic accommodations, but is not mandated. This approach can be challenging for students; such systems can increase academic anxiety and there can be substantial challenges associated with having the required technology, too. If remote proctoring is essential to your course, please [register for RPNOW exam proctoring](#) and include information about RPNOW on your syllabus. Faculty Development and Instructional Support’s [Testing Resources webpage](#) may be useful in helping you set up quizzes and examinations, prepare for remote proctoring, and think about the low-stakes quizzes or practice tests you should offer to help students become comfortable with the proctoring system, allowing them to feel at ease when their performance on a test really counts.

**Communicating Assessment Approaches to Students:** In terms of system and technology requirements, be sure you understand and outline the specific details and system requirements in your syllabus, enabling students to arrange for the technology they need to perform well in your course. Unfortunately, Chromebooks, an affordable and popular tool used by many students, are *not* compatible with RPNOW, the remote proctoring platform supported through Faculty Development and Instructional Support. If you opt to give quizzes or exams using RPNOW, but have students who do not have an RPNOW-capable setup (Windows or Mac, recent OS, camera, quiet room free of distractions, etc.), please direct them to the Consortium Library. The Consortium Library has RPNOW-designated laptops available for check out, as well as quiet areas and study rooms that may be used for testing. Additional information on technology checkout for students is available on the [Consortium Library’s website](#). No matter the assessment method or proctoring approach you select, expectations regarding all requirements for quizzes and exams should be addressed in a clear and complete manner in the syllabus.

**Last Day of Class/Final Examinations:** All classes that have scheduled meeting days/times, except for some hybrid courses, must meet on the designated last day during final exam week in order that UAA classes can fulfill contact time requirements of our Credit Hour policy. The fall [final exam week schedule](#) is available via the Registrar’s website. Inform your students about the date, time, and expectations of the last day of class as part of your overall course schedule. If you are

not using the designated time for a final examination, please plan to use that time for a regular class meeting, in order to meet credit hour requirements. If you are not administering an examination, consider taking advantage of this time to debrief the learning that has taken place during the semester, assist students in thinking about what's next for their learning in this area, or encourage other types of student reflections. Any exceptions to the meeting day/time of a final examination must be approved by the Provost, through your Dean.

**Tracking Last Date of Attendance for grades of “NB” or “F”:** With the increase in online courses, federal auditors are taking a renewed interest in a student's last date of attendance. This is related to how much the institution must return in financial aid. When submitting final grades, faculty are required to report a last date of attendance for all grades of NB or F. If the student never attended or never participated (virtually) in the class, please enter the first day of the semester (8/28/23) and enter a "0" in the class hour column to show zero participation. If the student attended, please enter the date of the student's last known attendance. UAA can be required to provide supplemental documentation in proof of the last date of attendance. Documentation can include things like a submitted assignment, participation in a discussion board, an attendance log, or even documentation from outside Blackboard, such as an assignment or test emailed to the professor, or a quick check in with the instructor. Merely logging in to an online platform is not proof of attendance. If the documentation is in Blackboard, faculty do not need to worry about retaining it. It will be there for one year. If the documentation is outside Blackboard, faculty will need to save it for one year.

Thank you all for your attention to these items, and your dedication to our students. UAA is committed to supporting you, just as you are committed to the students. If you have questions about courses, grading, or need additional information, your Dean can provide assistance. You can always reach out to me directly as well ([drunge@alaska.edu](mailto:drunge@alaska.edu)) with specific questions or for clarification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise K. Runge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Denise Runge, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs