



Larry Hogan  
Governor

Boyd K. Rutherford  
Lt. Governor

Ian D. MacFarlane  
Chair

James D. Fielder, Jr., Ph. D.  
Secretary

March 13, 2020

Dear Faculty:

On March 5, 2020, Governor Larry Hogan declared a state of emergency pertaining to the Coronavirus/COVID-19 to ramp up Maryland's coordinated response across all levels of government. We recognize that institutions are expected to make decisions regarding campus operations that are in the best interest of the students, faculty, staff, and the community that they serve.

Social distancing is one of the recommended strategies from the CDC to prevent the spread of Coronavirus/COVID-19. We are aware that institutions are actively requiring faculty to move academic coursework to a distance education modality as a method to promote social distancing. Considering that Maryland is currently in a state of emergency declared by Governor Hogan, no approval from the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) at this time is needed to move lectures, discussions, assessments, and other academic coursework to an online format.

Attached are a number of resources to help faculty move coursework to a distance education format. Please feel free to share these resources. We have also posted these resources to the MHEC COVID-19 webpage<sup>1</sup>. If you have a resource that you think would be useful to other faculty, please send an email to [COVID19.mhec@maryland.gov](mailto:COVID19.mhec@maryland.gov). We will update the MHEC COVID-19 webpage regularly.

We understand that this will require faculty to be innovative in ensuring that the quality of academic coursework is maintained if a course is moved to an online format. Faculty will need to provide clear expectations to students regarding participation, changes in assignments or assessments, and other relevant matters. We know that institutions are working to provide the necessary support and resources for faculty to be effective during this emergency transition. Faculty are encouraged to reach out to their professional organizations for content-relevant teaching resources.

Distance education does not mean asynchronous. Faculty are encouraged to take advantage of their institution's tools for live webcasts of lectures, chat features within learning management systems, and other resources to allow for synchronous interaction at a distance.

We know that this is an overwhelming task for some faculty. We encourage faculty to seek support from other faculty within and beyond their department to share resources, ideas, and

<sup>1</sup> [https://mhec.maryland.gov/Pages/Information-for-Postsecondary-Institutions-on-Coronavirus-\(COVID-19\).aspx](https://mhec.maryland.gov/Pages/Information-for-Postsecondary-Institutions-on-Coronavirus-(COVID-19).aspx)

best practices. It will be important that faculty provide self-care through this process.

In addition to managing their own stress and workload, faculty must be mindful of the needs of their students. Not all students have regular access to a computer or the internet at their non-campus residence. During this time frame, students may need to identify and seek out new or alternative resources so that they can continue to be successful (e.g., finding a quiet study space). Faculty will need to be thoughtful about the needs of their students as coursework is transitioned to an online format.

Regarding programs that lead to licensure, the US Department of Education has left the decision to accept clock-hours in a distance education format up to the applicable licensure body. We have asked licensing boards at the Maryland Department of Labor and the Maryland Department of Health to provide guidance regarding the acceptance or denial of a change in modality (e.g., face-to-face or distance education) for clock-hours that are required for licensure or certification. We have asked that this guidance (or a timeline for the guidance) be provided by close of business Friday, March 13, 2020. We are similarly in active communication with the Maryland State Department of Education. We will post information regarding this matter to the MHEC COVID-19 webpage.

Regarding veterans using their educational benefits through the GI Bill®, the US Department of Veterans Affairs has not yet issued a statement regarding the impact on education benefits to veterans as it pertains to a mid-semester transition of academic coursework to a distance education format. We will share information regarding this matter as it becomes available.

We know that this is a fluid and rapidly changing state of events. We ask that you stay in contact with your students and campus leadership during this transition phase. The MHEC COVID-19 webpage will be updated regularly as information becomes available. Please visit our webpage regularly. We are grateful for your service to our Maryland students and commitment to postsecondary education.

Thank you,



Dr. James D. Fielder  
Secretary