

TO: Chief Executive Officers
Chief Instructional Officers

FROM: Marty Alvarado,
Executive Vice Chancellor, Educational Services & Support

RE: PRELIMINARY GUIDANCE FOR HARD-TO-CONVERT COURSES

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, colleges throughout the state have aggressively converted face-to-face courses to online or alternative formats. During this initial rapid transition, many courses that require technical machinery, specific work or lab environments, specialized software, or hands-on, applied instruction, have not yet transitioned to an online or alternative format. This memo provides preliminary guidance for colleges working to sustain these courses in the current environment.

Topics covered in this memo include the following:

- Recommendations for assessing viability of sustaining hard-to-transition courses
- Recommendations for when to sustain in-person instruction
- Updates on access to online, virtual lab platforms

Recommendations for assessing viability of sustaining hard-to-transition courses

While campuses should focus on sustaining as many course offerings as possible, it is also expected that some courses may not be viable to continue without face-to-face instruction. Given this reality, we recommend that colleges implement a review protocol to assess and sort courses into the following categories – transition, suspend, or cancel.

Courses that can be converted to online virtual technology platforms or other alternative formats should begin planning for those transitions while tracking any additional instructional hours that will be needed post-transition. Faculty should be supported and encouraged to leverage all available resources, including free online resources, to support the transition to online and other alternative formats.

Courses that require face-to-face, hands-on instruction should be weighted against locally-developed criteria to determine whether to temporarily suspend or cancel the course. Where possible colleges should work to temporarily suspend courses rather than cancel. We strongly recommend that colleges work to sustain courses that directly support the [essential infrastructure sectors](#), especially healthcare and first responders. Criteria for assessing the viability of a course continuing should include elements related to the *Vision for Success* such as the following:

- Impact to students' ability to graduate or complete a certificate
- Student accessibility to required materials or equipment
- Relationship or contributions to state's [essential infrastructure sectors](#)
- Immediate and near-term impact to the local community needs
- Viability of employment post course or program completion in light of the current economic context

Recommendations for when to sustain in-person instruction

On March 19, the Governor issued a statewide stay at home order. This means that colleges must reduce campus operations to a bare minimum of essential functions. Only "Essential Personnel" may be allowed on campus. Colleges and their local boards determine who is designated as "Essential" based on college district Emergency Operations Plans. All non-essential personnel must be sent home and teleworking protocols initiated for them. Nevertheless, colleges should continue to provide remote instruction to their students.

We recommend that college leadership work directly and ongoing with their local Department of Health to determine the feasibility, required conditions, and possible timelines for continuing in-person instruction in [essential infrastructure sectors](#). The Chancellor's Office will be seeking additional statewide clarification from the Governor's Office regarding community college programs that serve critical infrastructure sectors such as Healthcare and Public Health, Emergency Services, and Food and Agriculture sectors, and continuation of instruction where appropriate and necessary. The Chancellor's Office is also working with regulatory boards within these essential infrastructure sectors to negotiate and adjust requirements during this crisis. (See our guidance on the BRN – WEDD memo released March 20th.)

Updates on access to online, virtual lab platforms

A [Virtual Platforms for Instruction survey](#) was disseminated to all CIOs on March 18th to gather information on the following:

- 1) Understand the use of virtual platforms for instruction prior to and since the COVID-19 outbreak
- 2) Identify demand for virtual platforms for instruction as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak
- 3) Identify supports needed for effective adoption and implementation of a virtual platform
- 4) Inform decision-making and prioritization of one or more virtual platforms for statewide procurement

Based on responses to date the system office is moving forward with the purchase of [Labster](#), a virtual lab platform that supports a range of science-related disciplines. This is the first purchase to support system-wide transition to virtual labs. All colleges will have access to Labster, including expanded support and technical assistance for faculty.

We encourage all colleges to complete the survey, to ensure that your college needs are included in the assessment and prioritization of future virtual labs platforms. The Chancellor's Office is currently assessing existing state resources to redirect to these investments and to address the immediate needs of our institutions. Additional information on virtual lab purchases will be forthcoming, including support for career education virtual labs. Should you have questions about this memo, please contact Marty J. Alvarado at malvarado@cccco.edu or Michael Quiaot at mquiaot@cccco.edu.

Preliminary Guidance for Hard-to-Convert Courses
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