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Herd Business Responds to the Coronavirus Pandemic

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is an unprecedented phenomenon that is affecting each of us in many ways. The virus is a respiratory illness that spreads rapidly through contact with other people who have the virus. Over 1.6 million people from over 180 countries worldwide have been infected with the virus and over 100,000 of these people have died. Currently there are over 480,000 cases in the US and over 18,000 deaths. Many people carry the virus with very few or even no symptoms. Older people with certain underlying conditions are most at risk for needing acute medical care and not surviving the complications.

Coronavirus has changed the world and our country in a matter of weeks. The CDC has promoted practicing social distancing, good hygiene, and staying home as much as possible. Schools have closed, businesses have shut down, and many people are out of work. Hospitals are overcrowded as people with symptoms come in for testing and care. The federal and state governments are ensuring increased production of protective equipment and ventilators and shipment of this equipment to hospitals in hot spots where many people are infected. Governors have issued stay-at-home orders that limit travel and social gatherings to essential personnel only. The government campaign of “Stop the Spread in 15 Days” was extended to “Stop the Spread in 30 Days” as the US and other countries prepare for the worst incidence of deaths to date in the coming days.

The coronavirus has also changed the way universities work. Recognizing the need for social distancing, Marshall University dismissed students from classes a week before spring break. It mandated that all classes would resume after spring break in an online format. Marshall University, like many universities, is offering students alternative grading options including credit/no credit options and an extended withdrawal period. Most students did not return to campus after spring break and most faculty and staff are working from home. Despite these measures, on April 7, Marshall announced its first employee has caught the COVID virus.

The Lewis College of Business (LCOB) is responding to this ever-changing and rapidly-expanding crisis as are most business schools across the nation. The college’s accrediting body, the AACSB, held an emergency session during its 2020 Dean’s Conference in early February to discuss how the virus would impact business school programs. In late March, AACSB’s president and CEO, Tom Robinson, addressed its global membership about the impacts of COVID-19 and how business schools are working to stay connected, think innovatively, and act responsibly during this time of unprecedented uncertainty and change. A message from the editors of BizEd, an AACSB sponsored publication, refers to the wisdom of well-known business school administrators about how the pandemic can be a crisis that business schools emerge from in a changed yet positive way. It quotes Federico Frattini, the Graduate School of Business Dean at the Politecnico di Milano in Italy, who said “My hope is that the coronavirus emergency will leave behind a greater familiarity with—and a better understanding of the value of—smart learning.”

The LCOB remains dedicated to serving students and faculty in achieving its mission. Its leadership has played an active role in university planning and has been a driving force in a smooth transition from traditional teaching and learning to innovative and new electronic brainstorming, critical thinking, and knowledge enhancing discussion-based forums.

The LCOB has undertaken the following actions to deal with the enormous challenges encountered by the coronavirus pandemic:



- **Trained all faculty to teach online.** The college held a Blackboard Collaborate training day with Dr. Alberto Coustasse and instructor Tessa White as facilitators. Approximately 40 faculty attended two sessions of training. They were eager to learn about how to convert their classes to an online format retaining as much collaboration and discussion as possible. The LCOB was one of the only colleges at Marshall to offer its own training program. Faculty also made use of university resources, webinars, and self-help guides to become fully versed in online teaching.
- **Converted all classes to an online format.** LCOB faculty converted over 150 face-to-face classes being held during the Spring 2020 semester to an online format. Faculty used tools such as the Lightboard technology, Blackboard, Blackboard Collaborate, Camtasia, Zoom, and textbook publisher resources. Both faculty and students have reacted positively to this new learning environment as reflected in the following quotes.

"I have taken this situation as an opportunity to further my knowledge of online teaching by taking three and soon to be four webinars put on by Harvard Business Publishing about taking a class online and how to use simulations and cases online.

My students seem to have taken the change in the classroom in stride and no complaints have been made. I believe our business students are a resilient group that quickly shifted to the new normal". – Dr. Margie McInerney

"I appreciate all that you are doing for us during this time of uncertainty including doing your part to keep us in light spirits. I think I can speak for everyone in saying it is needed." – Student from LE 207

"For me, the new structure of this course is phenomenal. I enjoy how convenient and accessible the course is. I really appreciate your constant communication. You have done better with this transition than all my other professors combined. I thoroughly enjoy this course. Thank you!!!" – Student from LE 351

- **Communicated course changes to students.** Faculty were asked to modify their class schedules and syllabi for the shortened semester and the conversion to the online format. All faculty submitted a revised syllabus/schedule before the end of spring break to the university via a system called SmartSheet. In this system they were able to upload their revised syllabi and indicate what changes they had made to their course content, how they were converting to the online environment, and concerns they had. All faculty complied with this university request showing they were prepared for the adjustments to their classes.

Faculty were also required to communicate class changes to students through emails and postings to course websites. After doing so they were supposed to notify their department chair. Subsequently, faculty reported in on the number of students responding to their communication. This was done to ensure students were duly informed about their classes as they returned from spring break. A comment received from one student follows:

"Professor Tate: Thank you for going above and beyond in keeping us informed on all the changes that have occurred. I have read and understood all the changes in the syllabus and continue to watch for further updates. I hope that you are keeping yourself safe and healthy." – James Gibbs. MKT 371 student.



- **Entered semester-to-date grades.** Faculty posted student semester-to-date grades for all courses by April 8 at noon. Different than a midterm grade, these semester-to-date grades were computed based on academic work submitted by March 13, 2020. These provisional grades are distinct from the final grade and will not be used except in extreme circumstances.
- **Monitoring and reporting of student concerns to the university.** LCOB faculty are submitting emerging concerns about specific students to the university's Student Success Team through the Navigate Progress Report system. This includes reports for students who have not shown up in class or who have communicated other serious concerns about completing a course. Faculty can choose from six options (financial hardships, mental health or stress, needs virtual tutoring, no response to instructor, personal/family hardships, technology difficulties) and enter comments. This communication tool is available through the last day of classes on April 24. LCOB faculty have also been expressing concerns about students to the college advisors who are contacting each of these students to resolve their problems, issues, and concerns.
- **Developed undergraduate and graduate student grading policies (see attached).** Following university guidelines, the college put in place new grading policies for undergraduate and graduate students. Instead of receiving a letter grade, undergraduate students can now pick a Credit/No Credit grading option or withdraw from a class up to April 24. If they pick a Credit/No Credit option they must still complete the class and the Credit/No Credit option will be based on their final grade (A, B, C = Credit, D or F = No Credit). Students should check with their advisors on the pros/cons of opting for the Credit/No Credit grade. Some students will have technical or other hardships that will prevent them from finishing the semester. These issues are being handled on a case-by-case basis.

Graduate students will work directly with their instructors and program directors to find appropriate accommodations in the face of pandemic-related hardships.

- **Converted summer school classes to an online format:** Per university requirements, the LCOB converted all classes being offered during the Intersession and Summer I sessions to an online format.
- **Implemented a telecommuting plan (see attached).** The university remains open during the COVID-19 outbreak. However, non-essential workers were asked to increasingly limit their time on campus as the virus situation worsened. In response to this situation, LCOB administration developed and implemented a telecommuting plan with the goals of minimizing operational disruptions, maintaining desired customer service levels, meeting mission-critical deadlines, and ensuring personal safety and health. The plan began with about 50% staffing on-site and later converted to having only essential staffing on-site, with most staff and administrators working from home. An important component of the plan is having staff who are telecommuting report in to their supervisors at least once per day. This plan was used as a model for the university.

The following is a quote is from our Director of Advising who switched to telecommuting.

"The advising team has maintained constant contact with students since COVID-19 has made it necessary to work from home. Through Zoom and Microsoft Teams, we are able to meet with students and colleagues. We have also been able to set up access to the reports and records necessary to answer student questions while working remotely. The most popular questions that we are receiving from students are about the credit-no credit grade option, registering for classes, and making



the transition to the online format for their classes. Through email, phone calls, and virtual meetings, we are able to provide students with accurate and timely responses to help them be successful during this chaotic time.” – Lacie Bittinger, Director of Advising

- **Created a list of faculty and staff needing to utilize their offices.** On March 23, Governor Jim Justice issued a stay-at-home order and closed non-essential businesses. This went into effect starting at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 and affected the ability of faculty members and staff to utilize offices in Corbly Hall. Exceptions were made for those needing equipment or materials stored in their offices on a reasonably consistent basis. The list was given to Officer Terry, Director of Campus Police. Individuals on the list are required to carry an authorization letter from administration upon entering the building.
- **Maintaining communication among administrators and faculty.** The LCOB purchased a subscription to Zoom to hold meetings and keep communication open among administrators, faculty, and staff. Meetings that have been held or are scheduled to be held include the Dean’s Cabinet, the Executive Committee, the MBA Curriculum Task Force, and College and Departmental meetings. The Dean has also used his Monday Morning Memos and the college distribution list to communicate to faculty and stakeholders. The administrative assistant put together an updated contact list including cell phone numbers and addresses to expedite communication.

The LCOB faculty and students have also been involved in specific coronavirus teaching, learning, scholarship and community engagement. Some examples include:

- Professor Ben Eng replaced all the experiential learning projects involving outside companies in his three classes with a ‘Design for Delight’ project where students have to innovate a solution to a COVID-19 related challenge. They can choose to solve any challenge they want so long as it is COVID-19 related.
- The college’s iCenter is partnering with its grant partner, EdVenture, to provide West Virginia CTE teachers with innovation and entrepreneurship assignments they can give to their students online. The iCenter is also offering a couple hours a week to meet with local business that are struggling and need advice on how to pivot their business and create new revenue streams.
- The Department of Finance, Economics, and International Business is interviewing for a tenure track position and are inviting candidates for virtual campus visit. These are happening on April 9, 10, and 13.
- Student Dane Flanagan in Dr. Jamey Halleck’s MGT 422 Organizational Behavior class was deployed in the National Guard to help with the pandemic. His unit received training on how to put on protective gear and disinfect surfaces. His missions so far have been helping run lanes in Huntington for testing of COVID19, helping the food bank in Huntington package up boxes for elderly people while maintaining proper cleanliness protocol, and showing Walmart how to decontaminate the packages that they receive and how to keep the store decontaminated in general to protect customers and staff. They have also gone to gas stations and fire departments to discuss protocols for gloves and cleaning off the gas pumps. He worked over 70 hours in one week along and is always on call in the time that he has off.



- Dr. Alberto Coustasse has agreed to serve on the Evaluation Committee for the Swiss National Science Foundation to review grants related to the coronavirus. The seven grants he has agreed to review grants that touch on issues related to addressing general epidemic threats, and chronic disease, mental health services, telecommuting, and worker protection during the pandemic.
- Dean Avi Mukherjee is the President for the Society of Advancement of Management (SAM). He helped transition the SAM International Business Conference 2020 to an online format. The conference was supposed to be held in Nashville, Tennessee. However, there were concerns because of Governor Bill Lee's State of Emergency Declaration, active cases of COVID-19 in the greater Nashville, Tennessee area, along with some members having underlying health conditions that put them at greater risk. SAMIBC2020 was configured as an all-digital event featuring streaming individual access to the conference. This included research paper presentations and Collegiate Competitions.
- Dean Avi Mukherjee was interviewed by NBC affiliate Channel 3 and CBS affiliate Channel 13 on Tuesday, April 8 about the economic situation in the tri-state area. He has also been quoted by the Herald Dispatch. Here is a quote from the interviews: "With the economies being so interconnected in our Tri-State area of Ohio, Kentucky, and West Virginia, Avinandan Mukherjee, Dean of the Lewis College of Business at Marshall University, says anything a community can do to keep small businesses alive is incredibly critical at this time. Otherwise, the local economy is going to suffer a big time." Mukherjee says 1 in 4 businesses have already closed either temporarily or permanently throughout the country. He expects another 25% to do the same by the end of April. "At the moment, it's a supply-side shock," said Mukherjee. "This is like an earthquake, this is to some extent, it's like a 9/11 of our economy."

CBS Affiliate/Channel 13 WOWK (West Virginia) – Experts: Expect 25% increase in local businesses closing by end of month:

<https://www.wowktv.com/news/local/experts-expect-25-increase-in-local-businesses-closing-by-end-of-month/>

NBC Affiliate/Channel 3 WSAZ (West Virginia) – Looking at the economic impact of COVID-19 on West Virginia:

<https://www.wsaz.com/content/news/The-economic-impact-of-COVID-19-on-West-Virginia-569489771.html>

Herald-Dispatch: https://www.herald-dispatch.com/coronavirus/poll-one-in-four-small-businesses-on-brink-of-permanent-closure/article_df0929de-df14-51a8-a7f7-6c853dc450d1.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_campaign=user-share

- Members of the Dean's Executive Cabinet participated in the 40 Top Virtual Roundtable Series produced by Sara Payne Scarbro, Associate Vice President for External Engagement at the Marshall University Research Corporation. The first session was held on Wednesday April 8, and featured Susie Mullens on Recovery Support.
- Members of the Dean's Executive Cabinet and other faculty and staff created videos for current, incoming, and potential Lewis College of Business students. These videos are being posted to the college's facebook page and website. Faculty and staff that have made videos include Dr. Avinandan Mukherjee, Lacie Bittinger, Dr. Susan Lanham, Dr. Kent Willis, Dr. Nabaneeta Biswas, Dr. Deepak Subedi, Dr. Liz Alexander, and Dr. Nancy Lankton. These videos can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTV_BtSYH-rYUz6uNJC_oOxOEidbzkBv9.

Dr. Nancy Lankton, Associate Dean for Accreditation & Strategic Initiatives, prepared this report.



Lewis College of Business Telecommuting Plan

The Lewis College of Business (LCOB) has developed a telecommuting plan to address the needs of the university amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The LCOB Telecommuting Plan contains 3 objectives and 7 process and developmental guidelines, and 3 implementation and control steps.

Objectives

1. Minimize Disruption to Operations and Maintain Customer Service Levels
2. Meet Mission-Critical Deadlines
3. Ensure Personal Safety and Health

Developmental Guidelines

1. Job Descriptions: Reviewed the job descriptions of all 13 staff members to verify and compile information on roles and responsibilities.
2. Face-to-Face Interaction: Identified the roles and responsibilities that require internal or customer-focused face-to-face interaction.
3. Frequency of Presence: Determined the frequency of internal- and customer-focused face-to-face interactions.
4. Deadlines: Identified the sequential nature of tasks and critical internal and external deadlines, extensions, and targets.
5. Locations: Recognized location constraints to ensure broad office coverage.
6. Personal Flexibility: Compiled information on personal constraints including child-care needs, health issues, and other safety and health concerns.
7. Telecommuting Ratio and Time Allocation: Mapped information from items 1 through 4 to an in-office versus out-of-office (telecommuting) schedule (see attached). This will ensure about 30% staffing on-site.

Implementation Steps

1. Held an emergency all-staff meeting, and communicated the final schedule through email.
2. Ensured all staff has the necessary VPN connections, OneDrives, files and information, and communication devices.
3. Staff will have a phone meeting with supervisor every telecommuting day, and will meet with supervisor on their in-office days at start and end of the work day to review tasks completed while telecommuting and any needs/concerns.



**BRAD D. SMITH GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
COVID-19 GRADUATE COURSE COMPLETION POLICY
SPRING 2020**

With all face-to-face and hybrid graduate classes moved to a distance learning format from Monday, March 30, we hope all graduate students enrolled in the Brad D. Smith Graduate School of Business will be able to complete the semester online and earn a letter grade. However, some students may experience unexpected hardships, such as:

- Technological
 - No desktop computer, laptop, or tablet at current home
 - Internet service with low bandwidth, or no internet service at all
 - No cell service in the area, or a weak/spotty cell signal
- Social/Medical
 - Illness
 - Care for family member
 - Disruption due to family illness

Such students should first work with their professor to resolve issues that arise. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, students may bring the issue to the attention of the Associate Director of the Brad D. Smith Graduate School of Business, Mr. Wes Spradlin. The Associate Director will work with the following team to resolve the hardship:

- Course Professor
- Graduate Program Director / Coordinator
- Associate Dean for Academic Programs

The expected outcome for students is to complete the semester online and earn a letter grade. Under extreme circumstances the following guidelines will apply:

1. Students may be given special accommodations to submit coursework and complete the course. However, for distance education to be maintained, there has to be regular and substantive interaction between the instructor and the students.
2. Students may request an incomplete (I) for the course. The student and the course instructor will then outline the remaining work for the course and the time for completion. Students must complete the remaining work before the end of the following semester, the fall of 2020, in this case.
3. Students may opt for **Graduate Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)** based on their final grades as of May 4. CR/NC is an alternative to the traditional A-F grading system. **The student must opt in to CR/NC no later than 5 p.m. Friday, April 24, and may do so on a course-by-course basis.**



- a. Students who select CR/NC are required to participate in all course activities and assessments through the end of the semester.
 - b. To earn CR for a course, the student must receive a final letter grade of A or B. Students who receive a final grade of C, D, or F will earn NC.
 - c. Under this policy, all CR grades will count as credit toward fulfilling a degree requirement; NC grades will not count.
 - d. Although the CR/NC grades change the number of hours a student has earned, CR/NC grades will not affect your term or cumulative grade point average either positively or negatively.
 - e. For graduate students who are repeating a course, the CR will replace the lower grade from the previous attempt, and the course will count as fulfilling a degree requirement. By contrast, the NC grade cannot count toward a degree requirement.
 - f. Some future courses or degree plans may require a specified letter grade.
 - g. Students who are on academic probation or need to increase their GPA will not realize an increase in their GPA with the CR grade.
4. As a final remedy, students may drop the course through Friday, April 24.
 5. In case of extreme hardship that can be demonstrated, special accommodations will be discussed.
 6. As always, please review the degree requirements of the Graduate College and the degree program published in the *Graduate College Catalog*.

Avinandan Mukherjee
Dean, Lewis College of Business

Jeff Archambault
Associate Dean for Academic Programs



**BRAD D. SMITH UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE GRADING POLICIES
SPRING 2020**

Due to changes in course delivery and for hardships that have arisen due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Brad D. Smith Undergraduate School of Business will implement the following grading conventions for coursework attempted or completed during the spring 2020 semester.

I. For all courses at all levels:

- Faculty are expected to enter a “semester to date” grade for all students enrolled in all spring 2020 full-semester courses no later than noon 8 April 2020.
- The grade entered should be A, B, C, D, F, or I.
- The grade entered should reflect the student’s performance on all assessments up to the point of grade entry, or up to the point at which the student stopped responding, whichever is earlier. For example, a student who has not participated in class since March 13th should receive a “semester to date” grade based on all assessments in the course through March 13th. A student who has participated since the resumption of classes should receive a “semester to date” grade based on all assessments in which the student has participated.
- “Semester to date” grades are not final grades for the course. Final grades will be submitted on May 4 according to the policies below.

II. For undergraduate students enrolled in undergraduate courses *who complete* the semester:

- The university policy on undergraduate, course-by-course selection of CR/NC grading will apply to students enrolled in the BBA programs.
- Students who wish to opt in to CR/NC grading for a course must do so on or before the deadline of 24 April 2020.
- LCOB departments and programs will provide to the Registrar’s Office a list of undergraduate courses that are to be exempted from the CR/NC option for students.



III. For undergraduate students enrolled in undergraduate courses who are *unable to complete* the semester due to vetted technology or personal hardships:

- The grade entered should be A, B, C, D, F, or I.
- The grade entered should reflect the student's performance on all assessments up to the point of grade entry, or up to the point at which the student stopped responding, whichever is earlier. For example, a student who has not participated in class since March 13th should receive a "semester to date" grade based on all assessments in the course through March 13th. A student who has participated since the resumption of classes should receive a "semester to date" grade based on all assessments in which the student has participated.

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