

CSM Professors And Faculty Preparing For Virtual Fall Semester

Posted by [Zach Hill](#) On 08/13/2020

LA PLATA, Md. - By the end of August, the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) will be starting its fall 2020 semester in an almost entirely virtual environment, with courses available in two online options and one hybrid option.

Virtual learning began on March 16, when CSM moved on-campus classes online due to COVID-19. This altered many students' plans for fall as well as professors who are shifting to web-based instruction.

Anthony Stout, a professor as well as chair of the CSM Business Department, explained some of the new expansions to online learning this fall "...include incorporating 'guest speaker' videos, generating instructor videos, using the new Real-Time Technology teaching modality to provide synchronous content for some classes, or preparing course content to be offered asynchronously for students to complete offline..."

Stout said that CSM faculty was fully prepared for this, having been operating in a virtual setting for over 20 years.

Virtual learning, however, for history professor Dr. Chretien Guidry, has been more of a challenge.

"I would definitely say that it has been hard, and has required me to reach even deeper in those strategies that support student learning," Guidry said.

Both Stout and Guidry agreed that, although the drive to campus is no longer a factor, things haven't necessarily become easier.

"[For] faculty, it actually requires much more effort to teach in an online environment. When teaching in the classroom, an instructor develops a lecture and delivers it to our students," Stout explained. "In a virtual environment, the instructor may prepare videos to post in the course or synchronously deliver a lecture, depending on the course modality, create topical videos for student reference, and generate engaging discussions and participate throughout the week."

Faculty at CSM are also acknowledging the challenges this will bring to students, making it harder to stay in contact.

"We really care about our students' success and understand they are going through a tough time with this pandemic," Stout remarked, explaining that keeping students engaged, supported, and encouraged is key to their success. "As we moved out of the classroom, we ran the risk of losing the student-to-student engagement... However, I will say that we've all looked into expanding our content delivery to make it more interesting and engaging for our students."

Students needing engagement can now make appointments with an academic advisor over video chat through a mylearning page entitled "Connect to Student Support."

Advising, Admissions, and the testing center are also available on campus by appointment only Tues-Thurs, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Along with staying connected, Dr. Guidry offered to students for the upcoming semester.

"My advice to students is to be patient not only with the learning but themselves," Guidry said. "This is a stressful time for us all, but we will get through this. Check your courses consistently and use those means of communication available to you so that you can keep in contact with your professor."

As a note to students enrolling this fall, Guidry added, "I always look forward to working with my students. Now more than ever. Helping people to further their education and to show them strengths that they did not know that they possessed is its own reward."

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