**LETTER ALERTING FACULTY TO SERVICE LEARNING SUSPENSION DUE TO COVID-19**

Greetings Faculty, March 12, 2020

As the University announced today, we are preparing to go online with our instruction until at least April 10th. Throughout the week the Service Learning Program has been preparing and having conversations with administration, faculty, and sites about what we could offer in this circumstance.  We have made the tough choice to suspend service learning activities. Many of our students are working with vulnerable populations in nursing homes and hospitals, and our students could potentially spread the virus or be exposed while they are in the community. We are also receiving calls that some of our agencies are beginning to close their programs to outside volunteers or cancel the programs our students are serving with. In terms of helping Milwaukee and Marquette prevent widespread transmission, we think this is the best option.  As such, we propose the following for our service learning courses:

* We are suspending service learning for the remainder of the semester, following the same procedure the College of Education is going to follow with their field placements students. We are concerned that even if we were able to resume after Easter, it would be disruptive to our sites to pull our students out, and then bring them back with only 2-3 weeks left in the semester.
* Faculty should not hold strict requirements this semester on the number of hours our students complete. Most students will fall short of their hours, and we would suggest they are not penalized. Our suggestion is that if a student has been able to complete at least 8-10 hours this semester, though not ideal, they should have had enough time and experiences to complete their service learning assignments and reflections. If a student was late to sign up, late to get started, has not attended regularly, and has not had at least 8 hours of experience at their site, then our suggestion is for faculty to give that student an alternative assignment to complete instead of the service learning. This could be an additional book report, a project, a paper, or a reflection on something other than service learning. Please note that the Digital Learning team, Center for Teaching and Learning, and Tyanna and I are available to help support distance learning, if you need help creating this assignment online.
* If your class is more project based, and students are working a special project, we ask that you let us know your plan and inform your students. We know some service learning projects could potentially continue, for example those that are doing social media campaigns or business work online.
* Students should be in communication with their site contact and with their student coordinator from our office. We will be sending correspondence to our site contacts letting them know of these changes. We want to make sure our agencies are kept in the loop. We do mention in the student letter that they should email their site contact the news of their departure from the agency as a professional courtesy. Students are responsible for obtaining an email from their site contact confirming the number of hours they were able to complete, so that we can verify their hours. That email should be sent to their student coordinator so we can verify the hours in MU Engage. The MU Engage database is online, and we will be using it to verify hours. As we approach the end of the semester, you will receive guidance on how to run your report from our staff, but you are currently able to go in and see how many hours your students have already logged. Let me know if you need help with this.
* Attached is an email to send to your students updating them about this situation. **Please send this out to students prior to Monday if the information applies to your students (if they are in a placement based service learning experiences).**
* We will be cancelling the face to face reflection sessions that were scheduled up until April 10. When we get word from the University, we will reevaluate if we can still offer the remaining in person sessions and we will explore ways to offer these sessions online. If you are concerned about offering a meaningful reflection assignment to your students, please let me know, and I can have the digital learning team enter the service learning reflection modules into your course. These are a great tool that have prompts that can be customized to your class and it also includes rubrics for grading critical reflection assignments. As always, I am happy to consult and brainstorm!

We are sorry our semester has been disrupted in this way. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.  Stay healthy!

Sincerely,

Kim Jensen Bohat

Director

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