



New Faculty and Instructors -- Spring 2024 Communication #1

Students require a variety of support mechanisms for learning and as faculty and instructors, you can respond to student needs both within and beyond the classroom. Below is information about the most widely used student resources to facilitate student learning.

Early Notification Program

By now, you and your students should be comfortable with one another - learning expectations, and collectively addressing course challenges as they arise. You may also notice that there are a few students who are not coming to class, do not log in to Canvas, or would benefit from most of the resources listed below. It is not necessary to wait for a missed major assignment or poor grades to [file a progress report](#) through the early notification program. Upon submission, the student's advisor will be notified and will recommend appropriate support services to the student. Progress reports are available during the second to fourth weeks of spring and fall semesters. You will submit progress reports through Navigate. Here is [a short video](#) that walks you through the process. This early notification process lets the student know they are valued and is a direct pathway from the faculty member to all the support services a student might need.

University Counseling Services

University Counseling Services (UCS) is available to both students and faculty. If you, as a new faculty member, are interested in seeking additional support through university services please go through [Employee Health Services](#) or [VCU Human Resources](#). The faculty services UCS offers are primarily to help you help students.

If a student threatens you or others with violence, contact VCU Police immediately.

UCS is your first point of contact for a student in distress. [UCS has resources to help you](#) identify and understand the behaviors of someone in need of attention. Behaviors that faculty might perceive as poor performance, such as sleeping in class, sloppy grooming, or inattention to the course, are also signs that a student may be struggling with well-being or emotional health. Before judging these behaviors, take a minute to read the UCS website and check in with your students.

If a student tells you that they need help coping, [UCS should be your first stop](#). They have short term counseling sessions, mental health screenings, well-being assessments and outpatient referral services. The program, [Rams in Recovery](#), is for students who also have substance use disorders. This program provides students with structured support such as recovery meetings, focused social events, and monthly community meals to encourage compassionate advocacy for all students attending VCU.

Finally, UCS offers [a variety of online support groups](#) focused on structural and cultural barriers. Students do not need to be current clients with counseling services to take advantage of the many online support groups.

The Campus Learning Center

In the coming days and weeks, students will begin taking their first exams and turning in substantial work assignments. At that time, the [Campus Learning Center](#) (CLC) will be even more relevant to you and your students. Students can make tutoring appointments in person at the CLC at least 48 hours in advance. Tutoring does not replace class attendance. Students in biology, chemistry, math, physics, physiology, and psychology should also take advantage of the extended study sessions available at the CLC that are based around planned review activities on current course material. Tutors are capable of supporting students in any discipline; the disciplines listed above are those that challenge students most often.

The Campus Learning Center also provides academic coaching, CLEP exams, and a variety of resources and tips for acquiring and developing productive study habits regardless of student level or background. On the other hand, if you have an exceptionally capable student, the CLC is always looking for student workers with a high level of proficiency in challenging courses.

The Writing Center

[The Writing Center](#) is another resource for those students who would like more specialized attention. Please note that the writing center does not help students proofread or edit their work. Their network of excellent writers will guide students in all phases of the writing process from brainstorming to feedback.

If you observe students having difficulty with a particular aspect of writing, such as using passive voice or inserting citations incorrectly, the Writing Center will provide a 50 minute in-class workshop, for both graduate and undergraduate courses. Writing center consultations can also be part of any writing assignment.

Student Accessibility and Educational Opportunities

You should have received notifications from the Student Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (SAEO) Faculty Portal that there are SAEO registered students who named you as one of their faculty instructors. Instructions for [how to access these letters are here](#). It is very important that before you approve accommodations such as additional time to take a test or a designated class note taker, you check the faculty portal to ensure those accommodations are listed on the letter. It's very important that faculty provide accommodations when needed and also ensure a fair and equitable learning environment. It's a tricky balancing act.

As you maneuver through this first semester take note of [Word documents that need to be more accessible](#) or [videos that need more accurate captions](#). Sometimes these are fairly easy fixes and sometimes you will need to work with a consultant to provide an equal education for all of the students in your classes. SAEO has the knowledge and resources to help you technologically upgrade course materials. Reach out to them directly for individualized consultations using [this form](#).

Military Student Services

There are many students on campus who have served in or are dependents of Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. Many times, veterans want targeted resources and specialized support. The first and best point of contact for Student Veterans is [VCU Military Student Services](#). You can call them at 804-828-6563 or email mmilitaryserv@vcu.edu. Their office on the third floor of Harris Hall is always bustling with students of every military affiliation. If you are comfortable, stop by and introduce yourself.

Student Athletics

[Student Athlete Support Services](#) addresses the particular needs of student athletes. Most athletes know where and how to access their services but as a professor, you may get a call or email from an advisor so it's a good idea to know that these folks are available to you and the students. All student athletes are required to make arrangements to make up any missed tests or assignments when traveling.

Additional information about support for teaching and learning will be shared with all of you.

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Additional and ongoing support is available via the [Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence](#). For support regarding online only courses, please see [VCU Online](#). [VCU Academic Technologies](#) may also provide helpful resources.

FERPA and student privacy

You may be aware of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Here we outline your responsibilities as a person in possession of the education record and directory information of the students in your courses. VCU's ability to protect student data relies on responsible handling of records by all faculty in accordance with the law and university policy.

The Office of Records and Registration maintains student records and thus represents the University regarding FERPA compliance. In practice, for faculty, FERPA compliance is the following:

- Never publicly link the name of a student with that of a student's Social Security number or V#
- Graded assignments must be handed back individually so that a student does not see the grades of another student.
- Printed class lists with any directory information, including V#s, should not be compiled or circulated, or posted on an office door or a wall..
- Discussion of student progress and attendance happens with the student. The student must provide written consent to discuss progress with anyone else.

- Student contact information cannot be posted to public facing websites, this includes contact information for affiliated students seeking employment.
- Student contact information cannot be posted to learning management systems, such as Canvas. Organization of groups can be done inside the LMS.
- If you are emailing groups of students you must use the "bcc " field or create an email listserv.

Situations not mentioned here will come up. When in doubt, pause, take a breath, and ask for clarification. For more information [read the tutorial here](#). You can also get any question answered by emailing Records and Registration at rar@vcu.edu.

Classroom computer use

If you are teaching on campus, you have no doubt already used the technology available in the classroom. **The most important thing to remember about classroom computer use is to log out everytime you leave the classroom.** Leaving your profile available on a public computer could result in compromised student data which is a FERPA violation.

[Classroom technology](#) is supported by VCU Academic Technologies. Real time classroom support is available by calling the hotline printed on the mousepad available in most classrooms. Monroe Park: 804-828-1098 or MCV: 804-828-3400. We suggest saving the appropriate number to your contacts. You can also access online support at itsupport.vcu.edu.

The TechSquad will provide audio/visual support for special events. If you know you will have a guest speaker or are organizing an event requiring specialized knowledge, give them a call and set up an appointment to discuss your particular needs.

Finally, Technology Services provides information and videos on [using the podium equipment](#) and [using Zoom in the classroom](#). Don't turn your nose up to those document cameras. They can be fun and useful to showcase in-class group work.

The Cabell Library

The Cabell library on the Monroe Park campus has more resources for teaching and learning than can be contained in a year's worth of orientation emails. That being said, you can begin to maximize on these resources by setting up an appointment with a [Library Liaison](#). They can help you understand what tools, associated with your field, are available to students. Alternatively, if you need to make specific tools available, your Library Liaison is the first person to contact.

Remember that librarians are also teachers. They are able to deliver instruction, in a variety of formats, about using the library's resources and research tools. You can [request librarian instruction here](#) (requires CAS log in). They will need a few weeks advance notice and will ask questions about anticipated learning outcomes from their contributions.

Finally, VCU Libraries supports instructors as they transition to [free and open course materials](#). Librarians are available to contribute electronic books to your assigned reading lists. They can assist by providing relevant and free digital media. Additionally, there are publicly available and

licensed data collections for use in your classroom curated on the library website. Read over the [grants available to faculty](#) looking to adopt existing OER in their courses.

The Workshop

Looking ahead to the projects assigned in many courses, [The Workshop](#), in the basement of Cabell Library has all the technology tools to support assigned 3D print jobs, podcast recording, interview transcription and so much more. The Workshop provides the hardware and software for students to creatively explore applications in every discipline. [Hours of operation can be found here](#). Generally students will be required to train on the equipment they use before they need to produce an assignment. Get them started as early as possible. Student orientations are easy to schedule. Contact The Workshop staff to schedule a consultation on the particulars of your course by emailing them at theworkshop@vcu.edu.

Canvas gradebook

Sooner than you think, grades will be due. Specifically, midterm grades are due Friday, October 20th. While not mandatory, midterm grades allow the advising office time to identify those students who might need additional support to complete their courses and assignments.

VCU Online offers a series called, [Surviving in Canvas](#) - which is a helpful resource. The “mini course”, [Grading in Canvas](#), will expose you to the most accessible tools available to help make your grading more efficient and accurate. Many of the Canvas courses available through VCU Online take about an hour to complete and are invaluable when considering new strategies for maximizing the gradebook features.

In addition, [VCU Academic Technologies](#) provides proprietary Canvas support to help faculty who are a little more adventurous in the LMS. Academic Technologies provides instructor guides, video guides, a learning systems academy and incredible quicklinks to prevent plagiarism, weight final grades, add extra credit and automatically curve a course grade. See [this list of Canvas features](#) and inquiries for the many related resources curated by faculty.

Campus safety

VCU is committed to creating an environment where students and faculty feel safe and welcomed. If you are ever in need of immediate assistance in an emergency you should call 911. To reach campus police in an emergency use the easy to remember 804-828-1234 or from any university phone just dial 8-1234. Or if you want to thoughtfully report a crime you can [use this form](#) located on the VCU Police website.

Another way to protect yourself and your students in real time is to sign up for the [VCU text alert system](#) right away. This text system will immediately alert you to emergencies, weather delays, and areas of operational impact. In the event of a life threatening emergency, such as a tornado, on campus several sirens will sound and action alerts such as “take shelter on the lowest level of the building” will stream across phones and computers in the vicinity of the alert.

How to respond to an active shooter event can be found [on this website](#). There are additional videos and training from FEMA at the bottom of the page. Many doors on campus do not lock from the inside. Know the features of each classroom in which you teach to give yourself and students the best chance for survival.

For an after hours, 5pm to 8am, shuttle ride to your car, VCU offers the RamSafe bus. To access the bus location, use the [Ride Pingo app](#). Once you have the app installed and have set up an account, you will be able to track the location of the RamSafe bus. The phone number for the RamSafe dispatch is 804-828-7233 (SAFE). On the MCV campus faculty and staff should call 804-828-9255 (WALK) for an escort to your car. This service is also available after typical business hours, 5:00pm to 8:00 am, and you should always have your VCUCard to show to the drivers.

[The VCU Police department](#) is an incredible resource for more information on campus safety.

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Explore the additional resources available through [Faculty Affairs](#) which supports all faculty and instructors across both campuses.

[The Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence](#)

has made you aware of the resources available to faculty that anchor their courses in excellent models and pedagogies, beginning with the construction of an inclusive, comprehensive [syllabus](#). [An additional mix of resources](#) that includes workshop recordings and VCU Guides can be found on [this page of curated resources](#). Look for new items to support teaching such as a resource tool about Generative AI and teaching and Learning. The recordings of related sessions organized in Spring 2023 are available [here](#).

Look for many more initiatives and insights from the Faculty Affairs, Office of the Provost as we find ways to support your goals with access to professional development sessions, career advancement, conferences, and comprehensive resource tools such as classroom observation processes, and writing retreats. We sincerely hope you are successful in all of your teaching endeavors at VCU. Please reach out to the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence at ctle@vcu.edu with any questions you might have as you move forward this semester.