

Subject: (New) Fall 2020 Course Schedule (Update/Extension)

Date: Wednesday, July 15, 2020 at 8:33:33 AM Mountain Standard Time

From: Office of the Registrar

To: provost@rice.edu, Dean of Undergraduates, Dean of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

Dear Colleagues,

We apologize for flooding you with additional emails, but some significant things changed in just the past day that warrant an additional communication. The Federal Government rescinded its policy on international students and online courses, and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee made a small change in Policy 846 related to the definition of “online” versus “face-to-face” courses. Both of these may have significant effects on how courses will be defined for this coming Fall, and so we write to provide some additional clarity on this.

Last week, the Office of the Registrar (OTR) sent information to the Deans summarizing the course offerings in their school and asked them to verify the information. Critical aspects of the information are the projected enrollment numbers, the method of instruction, and the type of classroom requested. The projected enrollment will be used to determine whether a class is automatically slated to be an online course (if the projected enrollment is greater than 25 and the instructor has not indicated they plan to make a specific plan to teach in person by dividing up the course in some way), and the projected enrollment will also be used to assign classrooms that ensure physical distancing will be possible. The assigning of classrooms is a particularly complicated task, so we request that you please advise the OTR of any changes as soon as possible.

The Senate Executive Committee changed the definition of an online course in Policy 846. Our definition was not fully consistent with our accrediting agency (SACSCOC), so the change was made to make Rice consistent on this point. According to the revised definition, a class will be considered “online” if a majority of the instruction occurs with the instructor and the students not in the same place. This means that courses where instructors intend to divide the class and bring half the students in on one day (with the other half participating remotely) and the other half in on the next day will be considered “face-to-face” in the course schedule. Please note, the designation in the course schedule is based on how the instructor intends to teach the course, so as faculty consider whether their course is “face-to-face” or “online,” instructors should not worry about how many students actually attend in person or not.

As a result of these changes and everything else that is currently happening, we understand that faculty may need a little more time to decide just how they will teach their courses this Fall which affects how they are classified in the course schedule. Since the students need to see this information when they sign up for courses, the Academic Restart Committee (ARC) has recommended that we extend the current pause in course registration by one week. Therefore, continuing students (undergraduate and graduate) will not start adjusting their course selections (adding and dropping) until Monday, July 27. We ask that any changes needed to the method of instruction (face-to-face versus online) for courses with projected enrollments of 25 or fewer be communicated to the OTR by the close of business on Wednesday, July 22 in order to give the OTR time to finalize the information in the course schedule.

Thank You for Your Patience and Hard Work,

Chris Johns-Krull, ARC Chair

David Tenney, Registrar

