

TRiO

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

April 2020

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE VISIONS AND RX PROGRAMS

THE DIGITAL ISSUE

Rx & Visions Updates and Reminders

by Gaurav Khanna,

Director of the Visions and Rx Programs

I have been at Mount Wachusett Community College for almost 18 years now. Individual events stand out, but there are many semesters that just blur together. But boy, do we have a semester for the ages! No one is going to forget the Spring 2020 semester in a hurry! I don't need to recap everything that has happened so far, and the twists and turns and changes that have taken place to get us where we are. Even now things are fluid and change on a dime.

However, through it all, we are inspired by seeing the determination that so many of you exhibit to be positive and succeed. This mass migration of instruction to a virtual environment is not ideal but it's also not the first obstacle that has come your way in life, and it won't be the last. We are here to help you through this challenge in any way that we can. This week we have a mini boot camp to help you adapt to our new reality. On Wednesday, 4/1 we have a workshop on how to plan and manage your most scarce resource, your time: Time

Management in the Twilight Zone. On Thursday 4/2 we'll do the Coffee and Catch Up we started last week with Lauren and Alaina hosting for Visions and Rx respectively. On Friday 4/3 we'll run a session titled Juggling Family, Work and School under One Roof. All sessions will be from 12:30 to 1:30pm, our regular seminar slots.

The important thing to remember is that we are OPEN and here to support you.

Out of necessity, our primary modes of communication will be email, phones, text and Zoom.

Emails: All staff are monitoring their emails and responding to questions and setting up appointments. For more detailed discussions, counselors will invite you to a Zoom meeting where we can have a direct conversation.

Phones: All phone numbers are being monitored and voicemails are sent to staff via email so you can still call and leave a message and it will be delivered to

the recipient. Make sure you include a good time to call you back and a phone number in your message. Call backs may come from a private number. If we do not get through we will usually leave a message letting you know that the call is from us and try to call you back in a few minutes.

Text: The program texting number is still active and being used. If you have a quick question you can text us at 507-400-8746.

Zoom: This is a free video conferencing software that we will be using for tutoring, advising sessions, seminars, etc. You can download it at zoom.us and practice using it with friends and family. It can be used on your smartphone or computer.

I hope all of you and your families are safe and well during this time. Please take care of yourselves and focus on your positive relationships. They will be important to making it through this time and emerging stronger on the other side!

Making the Transition to Online Courses

by Catherine Maddox-Wiley

Rx Retention Specialist

So, you weren't planning to be in an online class, let alone multiple online courses. Perhaps fear has kicked in. Your professors, advisors, deans and college administrators understand!

Online learning requires students to more actively participate in the learning process. Here, we offer many tips for transitioning to online. We also encourage you to discuss your individual needs and concerns with your TRIO advisors.

Transitioning

The first step in this process is **acceptance**. If you avoided online courses, you may feel disappointed and frustrated. To move forward, acknowledge your displeasure, express it, and then **make the decision not to dwell on it**. The important goal is the effort not to lose the semester, to be as successful as possible. Rylie Faulkner, a PN student, put a positive spin on these circumstances, explaining that the full online experience is **good preparation for the online bachelor's degree** in nursing that she plans to pursue.

Online learning may require you to **read more carefully**, especially instructions. Review the new or revised syllabus, too. It will be helpful for you to make lists of the questions you have and the information that needs to be clarified. You'll have a substantial chat or email for the professor and classmates rather than asking one question at a time.

You may find that if you **slow down** you may be able to complete assignments more thoroughly and efficiently. Expecting to rush through a project may create anxiety if all doesn't go well. Printing and handing in a paper are second nature to you by now. Uploading a paper, finding homework materials on Blackboard, or interpreting the instructions for assignments will be more time consuming, especially as professors

have varying methods of using online tools.

Use tutorials to learn more about your computer's capabilities. Blackboard and YouTube offer short how-to videos. Investing the time to learn about technology may save you time in the long run.

Commit to yourself that you will do the best that you can. Keep in mind that **help is available**, so don't hesitate to ask for it! Most of the college's academic services are still available, i.e. tutoring and library assistance.

Time Management

Some of you may be able to keep your campus course schedule. That should make it easier to stay on track with coursework. However, if those time slots are now taken up with the kids and other responsibilities, create a new course schedule. The important step is to stick with a schedule. Your calendars and planners will need to be updated as well. Some of you have already commented that you do better with a routine – develop yours and see it through.

Stay Connected to Your Classmates

You are not alone! Students who are in your courses are probably feeling the same way as you are. Technology has its perks as study groups can be formed on discussion boards, Facebook, etc. Video conferencing is a huge help for many who are using Zoom or other programs to connect.

Stay Motivated

Just as it may take effort to stay motivated in land-based courses, you will want to consider what motivates you to keep going now. If rewarding yourself is useful, develop a list of feel-good activities that bring a smile to your face. Ask friends, family, professors, and advisors for a pep talk.

Though we don't know when the COVID-19 crisis will end, we know that hardworking experts will ensure that this is a temporary situation. This may be an unseemly concept to consider, but history is in progress, and we can all positively impact it. Look ahead!

Stay Involved

We know some of you didn't have time to be involved in college activities. Perhaps you have more time now and want to feel a new sense of purpose. MWCC's Brewer Center for Civic Learning and Community Engagement shared these links for Virtual Volunteering:

- [How to Virtual Volunteer](#)
- [Join the Vast Community of Virtual Volunteering](#)
- [Virtual Volunteering](#)

MWCC's Student Activities program is keeping things lively as well. Check out the [Facebook page](#) for happening events and opportunities to win prizes.

There's something for the kids, too. The [Cincinnati Zoo](#) has a Facebook page for animal cams and a live animal show every day at 3pm.

Summary

Football coach Vince Lombardi once said: "We would accomplish many more things if we did not think of them as impossible." How about it, TRIO students? Are you game?



Fall Registration: Get Ready for Your Advising Appointment

By Dawn Babineau

Visions Learning Specialist

Wow, amidst all the changes and happenings going on around us, it seems weird to think it is time to start planning for your fall class registration. Returning student registration starts April 13. Will life be back to normal by the fall? Hopefully. Will classes be offered in-person, online or in a hybrid format? Likely. The fact is we just don't know and if COVID-19 has taught us anything, it is that we need to be fluid with our thoughts and plans.

One thing that is a good use of time is to be proactive in our thoughts about how we would like to craft our fall schedules. As you start to prepare for your registration advising session, I encourage you to preview and preplan with these steps in mind:

Pull up your Degree Works: (You will find this as one of your apps on iConnect).

Start thinking about what classes you have completed and the ones you still need.

Read the course descriptions (by clicking on the course on the right side

of the degree works listing). Is this something you would want to take at this time?

On the last line of the course description, read about pre-requisites for the course. Do you meet them? Do you need to take another class first?

Two important Degree Works tips

1. Even though course time and locations are listed, please don't use the information here. A better, more accurate option is in the course offering tool.

2. When thinking about what classes you need, start at the top and work your way down. This helps you to better plan for course that have pre-requisite requirements.

Start thinking about what is best for you: How many classes would you like to take? Do you prefer in person, online or hybrid formats? If In-person, what is your availability for days and time?

Look at the Course offerings: Compare the offering to the course you

have identified in degree works that you need to take. Write down the course name, CRN# and the days and times that it meets.

Put together a mock schedule:

If you are comfortable with this step, go for it. If you need more help at this point...no problem! An adviser would be happy to assist.

Schedule your advising appointment: More information coming on this soon.

One of the reoccurring pieces of advice about living in an uncertain time is to try to keep as much consistency and normality as possible. If you prepare and plan with these simple steps above, you will have a better grounding for the times that require fluidity.



Transfer is Not Cancelled!

By Sarah Pingeton

Visions Transfer Counselor

It seems like everything is cancelled, but transfer isn't on the list! You may have heard on the news that lots of colleges are closed for the semester, but all of their offices are still open remotely. If you are planning on transferring for fall, 4-year schools are still processing your applications and getting out acceptances like normal, so you still need to get your application done by the deadline! Lots of deadlines are coming up April 15th, so

make sure you reach out for help completing your application if you need it soon!

Virtual Transfer Tips:

- You can request your official transcripts in the Forms & Documents tab in iConnect.
- You can go on virtual tours! Not every school offers this feature, but many do.

You can travel the whole country in an hour or less!

- Admissions counselors are still available remotely, and some are even moving their events online! Reach out to admissions at any school and they'll be happy to work with you!

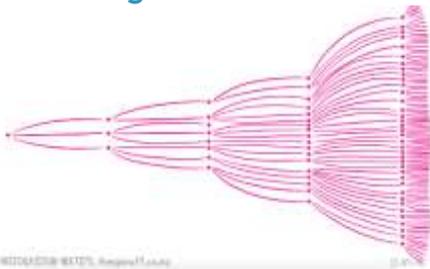
Social Distancing: What Is It and Why Are We Doing It?

By Amy Moury

Rx Professional Math Tutor

By now, you've likely heard the term "social distancing" and the many ways people are practicing it. But what does it actually mean to you in practical terms? Why is it important that we adhere to it? How will it affect the spread of illness? And are you doing it right?

What It Will Look Like If We DON'T Practice Social Distancing



WHAT IS SOCIAL DISTANCING?

By definition, social distancing is "the avoidance of close contact with other people during the outbreak of a contagious disease in order to minimize exposure and reduce the transmission

of infection" (from Merriam-Webster). While a disease is spreading through a community, we should reduce the spread of disease by reducing contact with others.

WHY ARE WE DOING IT?

The idea is that we limit our contact with others to slow the spread of illness. COVID-19 in particular spreads very easily and quickly. We have a better chance to eliminate exposure by avoiding contact with others. COVID-19 also can be carried by people who have no symptoms. Because of this, it is especially important to limit contact since the virus can be spread by seemingly healthy individuals to those around us who have risk factors making COVID-19 quite dangerous.

Social distancing is seen as service to other humans, not just yourself. While many of us will never contract COVID-19, we can be carriers of the virus. And through any physical contact, the disease can be spread unknowingly. Those who are immunocompromised, pregnant, older than 65, or have

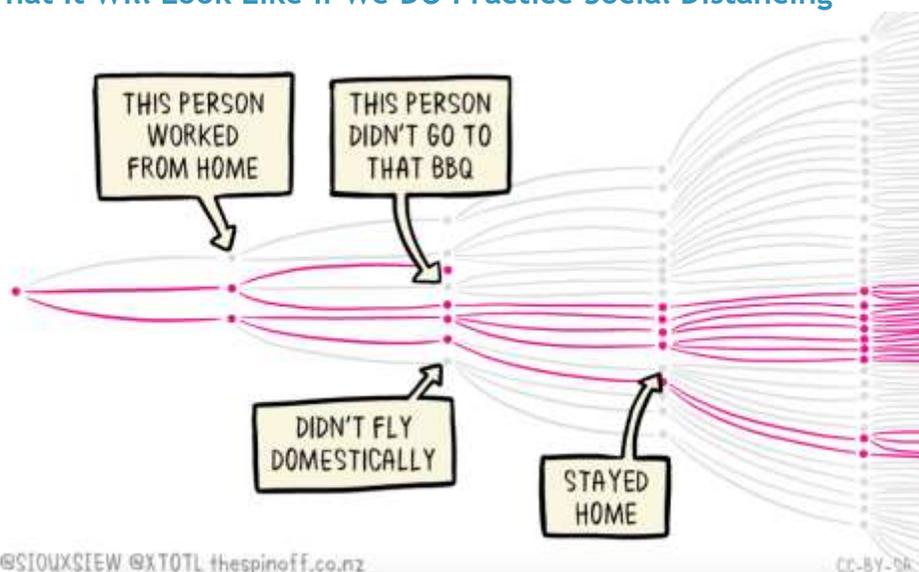
underlying medical conditions can become very ill if they contract COVID-19. Social distancing is a benefit to all of your community. Please help your neighbors, family, and friends by minimizing your contact with others.

WAYS TO SOCIAL DISTANCE YOURSELF

*You should follow these practices as much as possible. Some cannot be avoided, so do the best you can.

- Work from home
- Limits trips to retail locations to needs only (food, medication, etc.)
- Use food delivery services or contactless curbside pick-ups
- Do not use mass transit
- Exercise outside either alone or in small groups (following the 6 foot rule)
- Reduce physical contact with others, like handshakes and hugs
- Avoid locations like malls, gyms, beaches, parks, theaters, etc, anywhere that people tend to congregate

What It Will Look Like If We DO Practice Social Distancing



Stay safe
Stay home

(unless you really need to leave)

8 Things You Can Do Virtually & Non-Virtually While Social Distancing

By Kayla Coates
Staff Assistant

In tough times like these, it's hard to find ways to keep busy and stay positive. While we're social distancing, here are some virtual and non-virtual ways to fill your time and not get bored!

Virtual Tours of Museums & National Parks

Taking virtual tours of museums and some national parks is a great way to learn something new virtually. The [museums](#) and [parks](#) are from all over the world so you can travel from the comfort of your own bed!

Watch Musicals for Free

On [BroadwayHD](#), they are letting people stream musicals for free for a 7 day trial but only for a limited time! If you love watching musicals like me, then this is an opportunity that you definitely don't want to miss out on!

Local Library Databases

Taking a look at your local libraries online collections like their E-books and audiobooks helps expand your library

collection by thousands. Some libraries even have the option through the app Kanopy to rent and watch films for free.

YouTube Videos

When in doubt, you can always go to YouTube and you are sure to find something that will interest you. Talk show hosts like Jimmy Fallon have been recording their talk show from home and then posting the video onto their YouTube page. Writers, celebrities and artists like Mo Willems are having cartoon drawing lessons, story time or video chats/questionnaires which is the kind of positivity that we all need in our lives right now.

Virtual Gym Classes

While your gym is closed, studios and workout facilities are now offering online, virtual classes. In times like these, being able to still have the opportunity to take these classes helps manage your stress. Yoga Tree in Gardner and the Athol YMCA are just some of the local places that are offering this service.

Read a Book

You know that book of yours that has been sitting on your shelf for over a year now that you said when you have the time, you'll start reading it? Well now you definitely have the time so get reading!

Learn A New Skill Like Cooking!

Did you ever want to learn something new but didn't make the time for it? If you wanted to practice your [culinary skills](#), this culinary website is offering free cooking tutorials online!

A Little Spring Cleaning

Not the most exciting thing to do but it will definitely be one of the most productive things that you can do right now! A chore that you never really want to do but once you work on this even if it's only a little bit each day, you will be happy that you did. Especially when the nice weather comes back out, you will be happy that it's all done.

Using a Mood Tracker

By Lauren Clifford
Visions Retention Specialist

What is a mood tracker? A mood tracker is a visual way to track how you're feeling over a set period of time. It can be an excellent tool if you are trying to become more self-aware.

Why should I consider using one? If you are considering talking to your doctor about your mental health, then it can be helpful to see how you are feeling from day to day. It can be hard to recall how you were feeling two weeks ago, so this may be a helpful reminder.

How do I use it?

First decide what feeling(s) you want to track each day. Are you tracking overall

mood (happy, sad, angry, blah) or are you tracking one particular feeling (level of anxiety for example).

Then use the key at the bottom of the chart to decide what color will mean what.

At the end of each day find the space with the correct date and color it the space the color(s) that you feel best represent your day.

As the month goes on try to reflect on what you're seeing. Are you seeing any patterns? Are you happy with what you see? If not, what steps could you take to improve your mental health?





We are here to support you!

We are making phone calls, checking emails and setting up Zoom meetings. We even have Zoom office hours (check your email for the link)! We will be checking in with you regularly, scheduling advising appointments, talking transfer, checking financial aid, tutoring math and writing and more. We are planning some fun and informative virtual events as well to help you stay connected!

Important Dates in April—Note Changes to the Academic Calendar

Check your email for Zoom links and for more virtual activities and events as well as important academic updates.

Wednesday, April 1	Time Management in the Twilight Zone <i>Learn new methods for staying focused and on-track!</i>	April 6	Last day to drop Cycle 2 courses
Thursdays, April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30	Rx Counselors, Coffee & Conversation <i>Take a coffee break with your Rx counselors.</i> Visions Snack and Chat <i>Take a break, bring a snack and chat with your Visions friends</i>	April 13	Registration for Fall 2020 begins
These are weekly check-ins		April 20	President's Day—No classes all campuses, day and evening
Friday, April 3	Juggling Family, Work and School under One Roof <i>It can be hard to focus now that everyone is home! Let's check-in and talk about different strategies for managing a busy household.</i>	Thursday, April 23	Last day to withdraw from full semester and cycle 2 courses



Thank you for reading our April Newsletter. As a bonus, we have organized a raffle to see how many people have read the newsletter. Please click [here](#) and complete a short survey in order to be entered to win a prize!



These Visions and Rx students had a great time bowling at Gardner Ten Pins!



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