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UNH FACULTY SENATE MOTION # XXV – M17 on academic instruction during curtailed operations

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UNH FACULTY SENATE
MOTION # XXV – M17
on academic instruction during curtailed operations

1. **Motion Presenter:** Andrew Coppens, on behalf of the Student Affairs Committee
2. **Dates of Faculty Senate Discussion:** 12/7/20, 02/08/21
3. **Rationale:** Although we recognize that (1) a curtailed operations event at UNH does not constitute a holiday or “day off” for university employees or students, and (2) curtailed operation days continue to be programmed days of instruction during academic semesters it is the case that curtailment responds to varied circumstances of disruption in instructors’ and students’ abilities to continue normal and planned operations. These disruptions may include damage to property or persons needing immediate attention, loss of power and/or internet connectivity, etc. The unpredictability of such disruptions and their person-to-person variance require localized and customized accommodations by instructors and have the potential to exacerbate issues of equity among both students and faculty – the most under-resourced among the campus community are, on the whole, likely to be disproportionately affected by conditions prompting curtailment.

Instructional response to such varied circumstances requires nimble and flexible adaptation, which must respond both to issues of *equity* (i.e., ensuring all students have equitable access and opportunities to learn and succeed) as well as to issues of *pedagogy* (i.e., determining the best way to engage students in learning under rapid changes in the feasibility of course modalities and academic technology support). The Faculty Senate asserts that course instructors are the best informed and most expert in making curtailment adjustments to uphold educational equity and to uphold high-quality pedagogy in ways that conform to specific subject matter demands.

Expansions of course modality diversity during the COVID-19 pandemic have pushed instructors and students to be creative and flexible regarding course delivery modalities and have also underscored the co-dependency of this flexibility with academic technology and internet connectivity. Although non-face-to-face modalities have become more common under COVID-19 campus status conditions, both academic technologies and internet connectivity resources, in addition to concerns such as availability of childcare and other family resources, are specifically threatened in conditions that lead to curtailed operations.

The appropriate standard of instructional continuity to be upheld despite days of curtailed operations is the federal definition of a credit hour, summarized in the recent Senate Motion #XXIV-M18 (https://www.unh.edu/sites/default/files/departments/faculty_senate/on_including_common_language_about_fed_def_of_credit_hour_motn_xxiv-m18-050420_1.pdf). This standard does not require that particular instructional days or synchronous modalities are upheld during curtailed operations.

We therefore endeavor to clarify and further specify the 11/16/2020 direct communication from COO and VP of Administration Christopher Clement (which could be read as suggesting continuation of *synchronous* instruction during curtailed operations), and in the following motion to align policy and recommendations with above rationale.

4. **Motion:** The UNH Faculty Senate affirms the authority of faculty to determine equity-sustaining and pedagogically appropriate responses to conditions of curtailed operations on UNH campuses, given (1) the subject matter and pedagogical expertise of instructors and (2) their local knowledge of student needs and resources.

Faculty may not hold on-campus, in-person classes during conditions of curtailed operations. Students are expected to check course websites and/or follow faculty course-specific guidance for

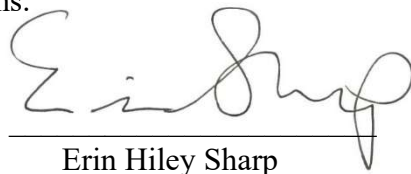
alternate plans. In making alternative plans, we urge academic departments and instructors to appreciate the unique challenges of synchronous remote instruction during conditions leading to curtailed operations and to use temporary asynchronous modalities wherever possible.

Synchronous online instruction or activities during curtailed operations, if chosen, should be communicated in course syllabi in advance as an expectation. Students shall not be disadvantaged in grading if they are unable to participate due to, for example, limited access to technology/internet services or family complications. If instructors choose to hold synchronous online classes or meetings during curtailed operations, meeting recordings, slides, and/or informational notes must be made available to students who are unable to participate. Flexible accommodations such as assignment deadline extensions should be offered, and it is strongly recommended that exams be rescheduled.

We recommend that syllabus language and faculty guidance be added to the newly developed “Faculty Resource Hub” designed and led in part by CEITL and AVP Ziemer, to ensure that faculty and students are able to communicate expectations and have resources for accommodation necessary to respond appropriately to curtailed operations.

5. **Senate Action:** The motion was put to a vote on February 8, 2021. The motion passed with 57 in favor, 5 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

6. **Senate chair’s signature:**



Erin Hiley Sharp

An unsigned version of this motion was forwarded to the following on February 9, 2021

President James Dean
Wayne Jones, Provost
Kate Ziemer, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Kenneth Holmes, Senior Vice Provost for Student Life
Chris Clement, Vice President for Finance & Administration
All deans and associate deans
All department chairs