Spring 2020

Faculty COVID-19 Reflection 7

Miriam Hill
Jacksonville State University

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Spring 2020 | COVID-19 Reflection

Name: Miriam Hill
Faculty Rank: Professor
Department: Chemistry and Geosciences
School: Science

Part two of the reflections concerns the impact of Covid-19 on our jobs. Obviously, our workloads have been increased. I feel very lucky that my courses were already entirely online, so that this was not a sudden and significant change for me. The materials I use in my online courses are the compilation of my many decades of teaching. These materials include many qualities demonstrating good planning and teaching. This includes, first, content that makes a comprehensive and complete curriculum without any risk of copyright violation. Second, it provides testbank capacity to enable unique but equivalent tests so students can retake tests multiple times without duplication between students or attempts. Third, my introductory course lecture materials are in video format meeting the guidelines for accessibility (closed-captioning, etc.). Fourth, most of my courses have either PowerPoint or video lectures and review materials and drill questions or resources. I have shared resources with colleagues across the country in the past, and I am working with Mark Sciuchetti so that he will have many of my materials in his archive of course resources. Along the lines of increased workload, I have helped Mark with developing some of the ideas and content to aid his transition to online teaching. This includes introducing him to and giving him a lesson on using Respondus.

The changes to the schedule required additional planning and manipulations. Furthermore, additional student contacts have had to be made, and additional associated email explanations and responses to their inquiries have resulted. We have used new tools to communicate, both between students and between other faculty. While MS Teams has been there, and I have been using it, it is nice to see my colleagues using it. Andrew Higgins just added groups to Teams for segments within our department.

We have had to expand our creativity using different approaches and applying variations on our traditional methods. This can be exciting and depressing. Things are generally harder to accomplish, and the uncertainty and insecurity dominates. Things do not always work the way we think it will. For example, I found my GIS software license had expired. It took a while as the problem worked through the department, but then I mentioned it to Mark and he was able to resolve it for me after I introduced him to Respondus. I was then able to make some maps related to Covid-19 and share them.

I have already declared the exceptional service I received from Chris Inman and the Online@JSU crew, but it still deserves mention here. A student notified me that the three lecture videos that were due would not play. I investigated and discovered that none of the three browsers would open them. I contacted help and Chris, and Chris responded within minutes. I replied and continued to explore the problem. None of my videos in courses this semester or previous semesters would work, so that indicated it was an extensive problem, not just something with one class. I had documentation that students had already completed the original activities, and those other videos had worked in the past. By midnight, less than four hours later, everything was again functioning. I am not sure what happened or how it got fixed, but such a rapid response, at night, with everyone working from home had a much faster and better resolution than I have had with many of my prior Blackboard or Canvas problems. It was another scary night, however, because I have had times where such problems required reconstructing the courses, and I could just see that happening again. As they say, been there, done
that. I am so glad it was not necessary. Most of my students were never aware of any problem. Many thanks to everyone who resolve the problem.

I think a presentation on Respondus for test creation, question management, and uploading tests and pools to Canvas would be especially useful. The links on the JSU website are circular. This last time, when we finally managed to find our way to it, occurred without us being able to recreate how we found access. I now remember that ultimately, the link is in Canvas, but it would take me a while to make my way there once again, and that would be the third time in a month or two. I think many on campus are unaware of this available resource or the way it can be used to archive testing materials to improve and speed test generation for classroom use or for both online and on campus testing.

I am tired. The last time I was out and about was the last campus Faculty Common session. That will likely be my last “normal” day on campus. Easter will be day 30 of my hermitage. Ha ha I have been faced with a paycheck crisis, and I have been pleasantly surprised at how we have been working through this problem. This especially applies to filing the police report without direct contact. I feel like this is part of an Alice Cooper album, such as Welcome to My Nightmare.

My 45 years of experience position me so that I think I have things under control for these last summer terms. I do not know of anything outside of the normal that I need. It has been a long, hard road with plenty of mountains and dead ends, and this year is certainly not ending the way I anticipated or planned. I will social distance and then quietly at some point move off toward the northern lights.