

Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday, Western suspended most of its face-to-face instruction. UFWW has not been a part of most of the planning by the university, but the administration has done a good job of communicating and occasionally consulting with us. We understand that the administration has been under a lot of pressure and that they are doing their best to balance a variety of issues. We support administrative efforts to retain as much of the educational experience for our students while also protecting the safety of Western and the larger community.

As the situation continues to develop, UFWW wants to emphasize the following:

1. Safety comes first. Faculty should feel free to make the choices that are best for them and their students. Faculty should also respect and work with the choices that students make. No faculty member should feel any pressure to do anything that endangers them, their students, or their community. Any faculty member who feels they are being asked to do something unreasonable should contact UFWW. See CBA 25.2 *Workplace Safety: Faculty members shall not be required to work under hazardous conditions or perform tasks that endanger their health or safety without appropriate precautions.*
2. We should all recognize that while Western's outstanding faculty will continue to do the best possible work for our students, this situation will inevitably lead to a compromised educational experience. Faculty should do the best they can for their students within their capabilities, using their expertise and recognizing the particularities of their disciplines and subjects. The speed with which the situation is changing necessitates flexibility and improvisation and the recognition that there will not be one best way to adapt to new constraints. Now is not the time for rigidity regarding any particular mode of instruction, and faculty retain the academic freedom to determine the best way to deliver the material particular to their expertise. We appreciate the administration's efforts to make online teaching resources available to faculty and we encourage our colleagues to take advantage of these resources as they see fit. Any faculty member who feels they are being asked or forced to make choices that are not the best for their students should contact UFWW. See CBA 2.2 and CBA 9.2 *Teaching Workload: Since teaching methods vary across disciplines, each department and college is best able to access the efforts required to teaching in their discipline.*
3. We should all recognize that this situation will inevitably create hardships and inequalities among students. Not every student has access to reliable wi-fi and expensive technology. We should err on the side of generosity when it comes to things like assignments, deadlines, and evaluation. We should not forget that our ultimate goal is to provide our students with the best educational experience possible under difficult circumstances.
4. This situation has serious implications for intellectual property rights. The WWU-UFWW Collective Bargaining Agreement has very clear protections of faculty intellectual property in online environments and UFWW will do everything we can to ensure that faculty intellectual property is protected from encroachment by the administration, the state, or any technology vendors. See CBA Sec 15 Intellectual Property.

5. We also recognize that this situation is creating much invisible and unpaid new work for faculty, staff, and students. UFWW recognizes that the emergency situation necessitates some of this work in Spring Quarter 2020, but we will not tolerate any attempt to permanently increase faculty workload beyond this specific emergency situation. We are also determined to make sure that compromised educational experiences do not slide toward any sort of *new normal* once this emergency has passed. Again, see CBA Sec 9 – Workload.

Our statewide and national affiliates (NEA and AFT) continue to monitor this evolving situation and UFWW will do everything we can to protect the safety and rights of our faculty, our staff colleagues, and our students. Again, we very much appreciate the efforts our administrative colleagues have made and continue to make and we will continue to cooperate with them in managing this emergency. We encourage all faculty to do whatever they feel necessary to protect themselves and those around them, and we feel strongly that understanding and generosity are most important as we get through this together.

Please do not hesitate to contact UFWW if you have any questions.

Rich Brown, UFWW President

UFWW Executive Committee