



SMU

Elizabeth G. Lobo
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Office of the Provost

March 2, 2021

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students:

After nearly a year of the most remarkable adjustments by every member of the SMU community, the week before last challenged us again beyond imagination. We are thankful to everyone who worked throughout that week to keep us safe, healthy, warm and nourished.

SMU cancelled almost five full days of instruction during the weather event and, as you know, we need to recover lost time. During the campus closure, leaders from across the University consulted to determine our best options. These conversations included Faculty Senate Executive and Calendar Committees, Student Senate, Council of Deans, Accreditation Representatives, Provost's Leadership Forum, Offices of Financial Aid and Enrollment Services, Student Affairs, and the President's Executive Council.

After careful consideration of federal credit-hour requirements, the consensus of the groups we consulted is to use Good Friday and Reading Day One to make up two instructional days; the remaining direct instruction will be left to the discretion of individual faculty members to ensure that all course outcomes are met. We made the decision to use Good Friday only after careful consideration, and the campus leaders we worked with – including those from Faculty and Student Senate – advised it would be preferable to scheduling a make-up day on a Saturday. We intend to be sensitive to and accommodate the members of our SMU community whose religious practices include a full observation of Good Friday.

Religious Observance & SMU Holiday:

Students whose religious practices include observance of Good Friday should notify their professors in writing now, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence.

Faculty whose religious practices include observance of Good Friday should notify their department chair (or otherwise appropriate person within their department) and explain alternative accommodations that will be made for missing class, such as holding make-up class(es), a guest speaker(s), etc. (University Policy No. 7.22.)

Nonexempt employees who work Good Friday to support class delivery should record their hours worked, as usual, and will be compensated for the time worked as well as holiday pay. Exempt employees who must work Good Friday to support class delivery should arrange with their supervisor for another time to recognize the holiday. Any employee asked to work the holiday to support class delivery will be granted the same sensitivity to religious tradition.

Revising Syllabi:

We ask faculty to amend their syllabi to reflect the make-up days and distribute the revised syllabi to all students via Canvas and to provide a copy to their department chairs or program directors. Chairs and directors are asked to retain these syllabi on file should they be needed for upcoming accreditation reviews and visits.

Good Friday, April 2: Make-up day for classes cancelled Tuesday, Feb. 16

Reading Day, Tuesday, May 4: Make-up day for classes cancelled Wednesday, Feb. 17

All classes on make-up days will take place virtually during the regularly scheduled synchronous times. Faculty may deliver remaining direct instruction through a variety of *synchronous or asynchronous* faculty options, using pre-recorded lectures, virtual discussion groups, etc.

As a reminder, *faculty should not schedule exams or assignments to be completed on university reading days*. It is particularly important that faculty who may have previously scheduled work to be completed on the readings days also revise their syllabi.

Exemptions: Professional graduate programs may need to make different adjustments as dictated by discipline, specific accreditors, calendar modules, and/or constraints on students working full-time. Please be reminded that end-of-term dates must not be altered as that could impact students' federal financial aid. Deans are asked to notify the Office of the Provost along with all affected students as to specific make up plans.

Academic Support: OIT academic support staff will be available to answer the SMU Help Desk questions and to provide regular technical support on make-up days.

I want to thank each of you for working with us as we move forward to finish the semester.

Sincerely,



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