



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Teaching Faculty

FROM: Barbara G. Lyman, Interim Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs

DATE: August 18, 2020 – updated August 25, 2020

SUBJECT: **New Student Profile & Contributing to Student Success**

---

Welcome to the 2020-2021 academic year! This fall presents us with continuing challenges inherent in our situation that would have seemed entirely improbable this time last year. However, as we saw last spring, the faculty of New Paltz worked hard to make the most of teaching and learning in a disrupted and disorienting time. So it is that I have great confidence that faculty will once again seek to work with students in compassionate and supportive ways while advancing students' academic as well as personal growth and development.

We are delighted that 950 first-year and 700 transfer students will join the 5,000 continuing undergraduate students and 950 new and continuing graduate students, creating a near-normal enrollment picture at SUNY New Paltz, despite the disruption and uncertainties caused by the pandemic.

The incoming first-year class is academically well prepared and very diverse, with 46% coming from traditionally underrepresented demographic groups. New transfer students are academically strong as well. They are also a racially diverse cohort with 32% from traditionally underrepresented groups. Our new students also represent diverse academic interests, majoring in Business, Education, Fine and Performing Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Science and Engineering.

As we begin this year, you will find below information to have at hand to support our mutual efforts to help our students succeed. In addition to the information found here, you have available to you a newly developed [Faculty Toolkit](#) designed to support you in addressing pandemic-related considerations in your classrooms both virtual and seated.

**Policies that provide critical support for student learning, retention, and timely graduation can be found in the *Faculty Handbook*, posted on [Academic Affairs' website](#).** Please review these policies, which will help us reach our shared goal of graduating superbly educated students who will be proud New Paltz alumni.

The College [Syllabus Requirements](#), and an ADA-compliant **syllabus template** that aligns with them, are posted on Academic Affairs' website (see "Instructional Resources"), the [Faculty Development Center's website](#), and the Curriculum Committee's Blackboard site. You can also find web-accessibility tips in your Blackboard account, under My Community: "Accessible Classroom: Faculty and Staff Toolkit." If you do not see this community listed, please submit a ticket at <http://support.newpaltz.edu> and you will be added.

Additionally, the following (also addressed in the *Faculty Handbook*) are important items of note related to support for students that may impact the scheduling of your course material and course policies:

- **Final Examination Schedule:** No major examinations should be given during the last week of classes before the final exam period. A final exam must be given in all courses during the assigned time in the five-day examination period or on the Common Examination Day each semester. Final exam schedules are found in the [Academic Calendar](#) under the “More Calendars” drop-down menu. Just select the “[current semester] Final Exams” link.
- **Religious Observations:** Students who will be taking time to observe religious holidays should communicate with faculty, coaches, etc. as soon as possible regarding absences for religious observations and be prepared to discuss plans for making up missed work. Faculty and staff will continue to respect the needs of our students and, in compliance with the New York State Education Law (Chapter 161, Section 224), honor students’ requests for such rescheduling and collaborate with them to determine a path to make up missed work. While you are not required to place this information on your syllabus, you may find it helpful to embed it into your attendance policy statement.
- **Black Solidarity Day** is Monday, November 2 (observed on the first Monday of November, the day before Election Day, and noted on the Academic Calendar). During the week of November 2, we encourage faculty across all disciplines to consider incorporating materials or discussions that explore African and African American contributions. Please also consider encouraging student participation in appropriate extra-curricular programming (talks, seminars, panels, movie screenings, etc.).

We remind you that, in observance of Black Solidarity Day and according to [New Paltz policy](#):

- No tests, quizzes or graded assignments of any kind should be issued or due on Black Solidarity Day.
- Students who choose to participate in Black Solidarity Day should notify their professors beforehand and will not be held accountable for absence on that day.
- While you are not required to place this information on your syllabus, you may find it helpful to embed it into your attendance policy statement.

Please draw your attention to the following **student resources** that offer important academic support to our students:

- **Academic Advising:** The [Office of Academic Advising \(OAA\)](#) partners with the academic departments in support of sound educational planning and timely degree completion for all undergraduates, from matriculation to graduation. The OAA's general advisors are primarily responsible for advising undeclared students while faculty advisors are responsible for advising declared students in their respective major. The OAA collaborates with the academic departments in clarifying College policies, procedures and curricular requirements for all students. This partnership extends to supporting student learning and persistence via the Starfish online student success platform. The OAA is also responsible for supporting faculty in advising efforts. To that end, an OAA liaison is assigned to each academic department to facilitate communication and effective collaboration in support of our students' success. [Click here](#) for additional info.
- **Academic Assistance:** The [Center for Student Success \(CSS\)](#) provides students with peer-based academic skills coaching and advising, online tutoring, subject tutoring in historically difficult courses, and writing support across the curriculum. CSS services are intended to enhance, not supplant, other forms of collaborative learning. The Center also manages the campus-wide student success platform, Starfish. Please visit our website to learn more about the services offered this fall.

- The [Disability Resource Center \(DRC\)](#) coordinates classroom and/or testing accommodations related to a disability. Any student who requires such accommodations should contact the DRC (257-3020 or via email) as close as possible to the beginning of the semester. The DRC will then provide instructors with Accommodation Notifications verifying the need for accommodations. **Please note that the DRC is not offering face-to-face proctoring of tests and exams during Fall 2020 ([read more here](#)).** Faculty are strongly encouraged to use Blackboard to administer tests and provide the accommodation of extended time for eligible students. **The DRC will work with faculty to develop testing arrangements on a case-by-case basis if using Blackboard is not an option.** Specific questions about services and accommodations may be directed to Deanna Knapp, Assistant Director ([knappd@newpaltz.edu](mailto:knappd@newpaltz.edu)) or Jean Vizvary, Director ([visvaryj@newpaltz.edu](mailto:visvaryj@newpaltz.edu)).
- In partnership with academic and professional faculty, the [Office of Veteran & Military Services \(OVMS\)](#) makes every effort to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals who must be absent due to military obligations. The student and faculty member must agree that the length of the absence is reasonable for the type and structure of the course and must devise a written plan detailing expectations for successful course completion. Students who actively participate in the United States Military Reserve or National Guard are highly encouraged to provide each faculty member, as well as the OVMS, a copy of their Reserve and/or National Guard schedule during the first week of class each semester.

Note: The [undergraduate student military leave policy](#) and the [graduate student policy](#) are available online for reference.