



MEMORANDUM

TO: Teaching Faculty
FROM: Lorin Basden Arnold, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs
DATE: August 10, 2018
SUBJECT: New-Student Profile & Contributing to Student Success

Welcome to the 2018-19 academic year! As we begin this year, I offer the following information about our incoming class and reminders related to how we can help our students succeed.

- New Paltz continues to be a first-choice option for impressive students.
 - We received over 18,400 applications for undergraduate admission
 - Our incoming class includes close to 1,200 first-year and over 800 transfer students
- Our student population continues to be characterized by diversity.
 - 45% of the incoming class identify themselves as belonging to traditionally under-represented groups
 - 96% of our students are from New York, but we have incoming students from states as near as New Jersey and Massachusetts and as far as Minnesota
 - More than 600 international students also contribute to our campus diversity, with 40 new undergraduate and graduate students representing nations including Bangladesh, Brazil, China, India, Israel, Japan, and Korea. Forty-six international exchange and visiting students come to New Paltz from our partner universities.
 - In the spring, we will welcome students from Chongqing University of Education in China to our dual-diploma program in the School of Education.

As you all know, bringing students to campus is only one aspect of our success as educators. **Policies that provide critical support for student learning, retention, and timely graduation can be found in the *Faculty Handbook*, posted on [Academic Affairs' website](#).** As we begin a new academic year, I encourage you to review these policies, which will help us reach our shared goal of graduating superbly educated students who will be proud New Paltz alumni.

In these final days of planning for the fall semester, I remind you to please follow the College [Syllabus Requirements](#), which are posted on Academic Affairs' website and the Curriculum Committee's Blackboard site and were also distributed by email on July 30.

An important aspect of success for students is **accessibility in education**. In addition to the laws that require us to make classes accessible to students with disabilities, it's just the right thing to do. Two excellent sources that speak to creating accessible syllabi and course material are [Accessible Syllabus](#) and the collaborative [Universal Design Ideas](#). You can also find our own web-accessibility tips in your Blackboard account, under My Community. Look for "Accessible Classroom: Faculty and Staff Toolkit" and "[semester]_The Accessible Classroom: Weekly Tips." If those listings do not appear, please submit a ticket at <http://support.newpaltz.edu> and you will be added to those communities.

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 5 (observed on the first Monday of November, the day before Election Day). During the week of November 5, 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 (noted each year on the Academic Calendar) 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.

I would also like to draw your attention to the following **student resources** that offer important academic support to our students:

- **Academic advising:** The [Office of Academic Advising \(OAA\)](#) is primarily responsible for advising undergraduates who are in the process of selecting majors. OAA also provides a variety of services and support to students in academic transition. To contribute to the College’s culture of student learning, sound educational planning and student success on campus, the OAA provides services, programs, and materials to assist academic departments in providing high-quality advising to all our students.
- **Academic assistance:** The [Center for Student Success \(CSS\)](#) provides students with peer-based academic success coaching, online tutoring, subject tutoring in historically difficult courses, and developmentally appropriate writing support across the curriculum. CSS services are intended to enhance, not supplant, other forms of collaborative learning. The Center also houses the campus-wide Early Academic Warning System, Starfish Early Alert. Please encourage your students to visit the CSS website to learn more about the services available.

- 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 (Student Union, Room 210; 257-3020) as close as possible to the beginning of the semester. The DRC will then provide instructors with an Accommodation Memo verifying the need for accommodations. Specific questions about services and accommodations may be directed to Deanna Knapp, Assistant Director (knappd@newpaltz.edu) or Jean Vizvary, Director (vizvaryj@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.

Finally, there have been some alterations in **Student Handbook policies** this year. Most don't substantially impact classroom experiences. However, I would like to point out two of the changes related to disorderly/disruptive conduct.

- Students may not engage in conduct that disturbs “a class, meeting, event, rally or speaker; or act in a manner that substantially or repeatedly infringes upon or violates the rights of others, including their free speech rights (e.g. – sustained or repeated disruptive behavior so a person cannot be heard).” Should a student engage in such behavior, it should be reported to the Dean of Students.
- Students may not make graffiti on any building or other property. This includes “chalking sidewalks, walkways, walls, and any other state property on campus, regardless of content, because of the cost of maintenance and/or potential damage to property.” Please do not create any assignments that require, encourage, or approve chalking or other forms of graffiti on campus.