



MEMORANDUM

TO: Teaching Faculty

FROM: The Office of Academic Affairs

DATE: August 26, 2019

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

Welcome to the 2019-20 academic year! As we begin this year, here is some information about our incoming class and reminders related to how we can help our students succeed.

Nearly 1,200 first-year students and 850 transfer students will join the SUNY New Paltz community this fall, as the College prepares to welcome one of the most diverse and academically qualified incoming classes in its history.

For the third consecutive fall semester, New Paltz will exceed the 2,000 new incoming undergraduate student threshold, the largest numbers in the institution's history.

This year's incoming class extends the increasing racial and ethnic diversification of the student population at SUNY New Paltz. About 48 percent of incoming first-year students are from traditionally underrepresented demographic groups, as are about 35 percent of incoming transfers.

For the second year in a row, the College will also see increases in the number of enrolled graduate students. About 400 new full- and part-time graduate students will begin taking the next step in their academic and professional journeys at New Paltz this fall.

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, please review these policies, which will help us reach our shared goal of graduating superbly educated students who will be proud New Paltz alumni.

For planning for the upcoming fall semester, please follow the College [Syllabus Requirements](#) which are posted on Academic Affairs' website (see "Instructional Resources") as well as the Curriculum Committee's Blackboard site. Also available are a **syllabus template** and [sample syllabus](#).

An important aspect of success for students is **accessibility in education**. 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: "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 4 (observed on the first Monday of November, the day before Election Day, and noted on the Academic Calendar). During the week of November 4, 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 student success system. 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 toward shared goals.
- **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 houses the campus-wide

student success system, powered by Starfish. Please visit our website for syllabus statements regarding CSS services and 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 (Haggerty Administration Building, Room 205; 257-3020) as close as possible to the beginning of the semester. The DRC will then provide instructors with Accommodation Notifications 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 (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.