**Office Hours Recommendations in Remote Classes**

**Office Hours**

Office hours are key to building engagement between faculty and students. They provide the opportunity for students to seek timely help as well as the opportunity for faculty to evaluate the progress of students and interact outside the classroom setting. In the fall, limited office space and remote classes will mean that many office hours will need to be remote, which presents both positive opportunities as well as challenges.

***Challenges***

·        In Spring 2020, some faculty observed that when the campus switched to Remote, attendance at office hours dropped. Students were reticent to sign up for office hours online, and couldn’t drop by in-person to listen in on others’ questions. It was felt perhaps, the Pass/Fail option and the abrupt transition to remote contributed to this drop, both of which will not be an issue in Fall.

·         In any semester, some students might feel that there is a stigma around going to office hours, and many of the students who are uncomfortable going to office hours are also the students who need office hours the most. In a remote setting, office hours will be more important than ever, which requires faculty to actively press the importance of office hours and de-stigmatize them.

·         Transfer students starting this Fall could have special difficulty in labs and group activities as they do not have apriori relationship with student cohorts.

**Opportunities**

·         The positive side of remote classes is that remote office hours could enable more students to participate at their convenience and pull in students who might not otherwise attend, provided the office hours are well structured.

·         The faculty should describe the purpose and expectation of office hours to change the culture around office hours. An excellent piece on NPR late last year covers this topic very well and offers some suggestions.

<https://www.npr.org/2019/10/05/678815966/college-students-how-to-make-office-hours-less-scary>

***Ideas and Suggestions - Scheduling office hours***

·         Schedule small, recitation type meetings outside of class for individual or small groups of students, and encourage everyone to attend.

·         Provide a topic for the meetings and office hours. This increases the likelihood that students with questions about that topic will show up and not feel stigmatized. Example: Announce that in Tuesday’s office hours, you will be talking about problem 3 on the homework.

·         Encourage students to sign-up for an office hours time *just to meet,* even if they don’t have questions related to class. This will enable the faculty to check on the student’s welfare. You could also consider assigning points for *meeting* to encourage this throughout the semester.

·         Even if you are teaching in-person, offer at least one office hour session on zoom to accommodate students who aren’t on campus. This will enable participation from a larger number of students.

***Ideas and Suggestions - Holding office hours***

·         If you are holding in-person office hours, social distancing requirements will make it difficult to view a student’s work. A wireless monitor connected to the student’s laptop or tablet can display a student’s work on screen while enabling social distancing. Additionally, students will need the appropriate technology in office hours to show their work. For example, if you would normally have students writing on a whiteboard during in-person office hours, they will need an iPad or other tablet device that enables writing to exchange ideas. Let students know at the beginning of the semester what they will need to participate in office hours. Contact Nick Stites for more information about options available to students who don’t have the resources to purchase what they need.

·         Use the breakout room feature in Zoom during office hours to have meetings with individual students while also providing opportunity for group interactions.

·         Have multiple instructors or TAs to support an office hours meeting. This way, an instructor can meet with individual students while the TA or co-instructor continues meeting with the larger group.

·         During the remote office hours, call on everyone in the session, even if their camera is off. Several students may want to stay in the session and learn from others’ questions. Calling on students ensures everyone is engaged.