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Reminder and suggestions regarding Interim Camera/Microphone Use and Class Recording Policy

1 message

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Reply-To: noreply@tcnj.edu

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Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

The Committee on Academic Programs has been charged with reviewing and revising the [Interim Camera/Microphone Use and Recording Policy](#) that was implemented in Fall 2020. While CAP's review is ongoing and a final recommendation is not anticipated until the end of the Spring 2021 semester, CAP has received testimony from key stakeholders on this policy (Faculty Senate, Student Government, the Council of Deans, Academic Leaders, Office of Instructional Design, Division of Information Technology and Campus Safety, Accessibility Resources Center, the Division of Inclusive Excellence, General Counsel, and the Dean of Students Office). CAP will continue to collect feedback and solicit testimony during the Spring 2021 semester.

In the interim, CAP is making the following preliminary suggestions for instructors and students to consider in advance of a permanent Camera/Microphone Use and Recording policy. Although this information would have been most valuable to instructors prior to the start of the semester when preparing for courses, it is important to send it now as it contains clarifications and key information not listed in the original policy, as well as reminders to ensure proper use of current interim policy. Due to the holiday closure and extended/required furlough periods there was not adequate time to prepare this prior to the start of the semester.

Please note that these recommendations are separate from those made in the [Online Proctoring of Exams Policy](#).

Camera and Microphone Use Recommendations:

1. It is the instructor's discretion whether or not to require camera/microphone use in their virtual classrooms. Instructors are encouraged to discuss with students at the start of the semester the benefits of camera use for course engagement and satisfaction, peer-to-peer connections, and overall classroom climate. Instructors may consider limiting their camera requirements to elements of the class session in which cameras are necessary (e.g., discussions, presentations, demonstrations of skills). However, in cases when an instructor deems camera use essential, they should consider the following:

- Instructors should inform students at the onset of class when they may be required to use their camera throughout the semester, and provide a list of the necessary tools (i.e., camera, microphone) as required course material alongside any required reading or similar materials.
- Instructors should be mindful that various factors might impact a student's ability to comply with a camera requirement, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when students might not be able to find alternate learning locations outside of their home. Students may also encounter unexpected technical issues and/or limited internet bandwidth due to sharing their living space with multiple full time learners or workers, and have any number of stressors associated with restricted work spaces, economic distress, and health issues. We also encourage instructors to consider students' desires to maintain privacy by not wanting to reveal the personal circumstances of their learning environments, or that might contribute to their inability to comply with a camera requirement.
- There are multiple ways for students to demonstrate course engagement and participation, even when not on camera. For example, students can still verbally participate, use the Chat feature, participate in classroom polls, contribute to a shared classroom Google Document, Google Slides, etc.
- Instructors should encourage students to use the features in Zoom (e.g., the "Away" and/or "Need a break" icons) to indicate that they are briefly disconnecting their camera (e.g., for restroom breaks, screen breaks).

2. Students who have concerns about meeting the expectations for camera use or have technical issues are encouraged to talk with their instructors. Students may wish to seek additional support given their specific circumstances. Below are example scenarios and information on who to contact for support:

- Students who have medical or mental health concerns about appearing on camera should directly contact the [Accessibility Resource Center](#) to arrange for accommodations related to camera/microphone use. Instructors are responsible for making sure that students receive ARC approved accommodations. If the remote learning environment brings any ambiguity to how certain accommodations might apply, instructors should work with the student and/or ARC to ensure that the appropriate accommodations are implemented.
- Students who have other concerns about appearing on camera related to equity and/or privacy are encouraged to discuss these matters with their instructor. They may also reach out to the [Dean of Students](#) to seek assistance in arranging flexibility with their instructor.
- Students who need additional equipment for a course requiring camera use should contact the [Dean of Students](#) office regarding their technology needs.

3. Students and instructors should note that all aspects of the Student Conduct Code and Title IX still apply to virtual classrooms. The following examples, though not exhaustive, will not be tolerated and should be reported immediately:

- Harassment of any kind (e.g., Zoom-bombing, sending explicit messages, etc.).
- Illegal drug and alcohol use on camera.
- Operating a vehicle while attending/participating in class.

4. When discussing grades or other private matters in a virtual setting, instructors are permitted and encouraged to stop such a discussion if another individual is present that the student has not explicitly consented to being part of said discussion. While the instructor and college would not be violating FERPA if the discussion were continued, instructors are encouraged to be mindful of student privacy and can ask the student if they wish to continue and/or choose to discontinue the conversation until no one else is present.

Class Recording Suggestions:

It is the instructor's discretion whether or not to record their virtual class sessions. Some instructors find recording class sessions useful for students who miss class, lose internet connection, etc., and to offer accessibility for all students in the course. Instructors should refer to the interim policy for secure recording storage instructions.

In addition, instructors who choose to record their courses are encouraged to:

- Notify students immediately before recording, and immediately after recording has stopped.
- Be flexible about students who may not want to appear on camera in a recording.
- Be mindful that participation may be influenced by the inclusion of personal details/discussion during a class session that is recorded.
- Consider including closed captions to maximize accessibility.

Thank you,

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