

Suffolk County Community College

College Brief

NO. 66 January 15, 2021
TO: All Faculty & Guild Members
FROM: Dr. Paul M. Beaudin
 Vice President for Academic & Student Affairs
SUBJECT: Facilitating Student Success in the Remote Environment

As we begin another semester of primarily remote and fully online learning we are more conscious than ever of the valuable lessons that we have learned over the past ten months. Our faculty continue to share best practices with each other and similar experiences are coming to us from around the SUNY system and beyond.

A recent analysis of help requests submitted by students to the Open SUNY Help Desk during the first week of the fall 2020 semester indicated a level of student confusion on how to access real-time online and combined online courses. To facilitate student success in this remote environment, I am suggesting that all faculty send information to students via e-mail next week about how to access Collaborate Ultra in Blackboard or to send the link to the first meeting with instructions on how to attend the course if using Microsoft Teams or Zoom. This would be exceedingly helpful if it were to be sent a few days prior to the first session. For users of Zoom, new links are being prepared for the 450 professors who utilize this tool and VP Azzam-Gomez will be providing new links for you next Wednesday evening.

Faculty may also consider opening courses early before the start date of the spring semester. This will allow students the following:

- Viewing textbook requirements;
- Meeting their professor through information added to the “Contact Professor” item on the Course Menu;
- Reviewing the course outline;
- Accessing the resources on the “Help” item on the Course Menu for the navigation of Blackboard;
- Exploring *SensusAccess*, an automated file conversion tool, that converts documents to make them more accessible (alternative formats, such as audio, Braille or eBook, or other formats such as tagged PDFs).

To open a Blackboard course early, one can follow the steps below:

1. Access your Blackboard Course;
2. Expand Customization under the Course Management menu at lower left;
3. Click on Properties;
4. Change the Start Date within the Set Course Duration area and set it to the date you want students to be able to access the course;
5. Click Submit to save.