



ACADEMIC CONTINUITY PLAN

in the event of campus closure

WHY? In the event of a major hurricane or other disaster, The President of Lamar University will announce the closure of campus and most faculty, staff, and students will evacuate. During recent Hurricanes Rita and Ike, Lamar was closed for weeks, Beaumont was placed under martial law, and residents were not permitted in the city. Since these storms, technologies of instruction and data security have improved, and now it is possible to continue academic instruction remotely. The technologies of communication have also improved and have proliferated. Almost all students and faculty have smartphones, tablets, pc's, or access to such. Today, Lamar University's website, Banner systems, records, and related data will be available when campus closes through servers housed at Texas State University, and the Zimbra email and Blackboard Learning Management Systems will remain functional as both are web-based and hosted far from harm. That said and following a reasonable period for evacuation, Lamar will be able to continue the delivery of instruction so that the affected semester will end on schedule and students can graduate, accept employment, enter graduate and professional programs, and matriculate without a major loss of time.

WHEN? Four calendar days following the President's official close of campus, all faculty and students will be notified by email (using official Lamar email addresses) and informed by web postings (via www.Lamar.edu) that instructions for electronically-delivered course work will be announced at 8:00 a.m. (CST) in two calendar days. Other communications pertaining to university activities will also be shared in this manner.

HOW? All faculty have Blackboard "shells" for their courses and many shells are already populated with course materials (e.g., AP, online, and hybrid courses). In the event of a disaster and after the evacuation period, course materials, assignments, chat sessions, course communications, and the like will continue for these faculty members and their students.

Those faculty without a populated Blackboard shell will be expected to: 1) post course materials, assignments, etc. in their shells and/or, 2) deliver material and assignments directly to their students through the Zimbra email system and/or, or 3) direct their students to existing online sections of their courses (e.g., instructing students to login to a colleague's online section and start at assignment x). Before instruction resumes, all faculty and students will receive, at their official Lamar email address, basic instructions about connecting to and using Blackboard as well as directions for accessing student email addresses (via Blackboard of self Service Banner). Faculty will be responsible for initiating contact with their students on or before 8 a.m. on the sixth day of evacuation.

Is this ideal? Of course not, but continued instruction is possible until the campus re-opens. This strategy may require faculty to "frontload" certain assignments/topics that are better suited for electronic delivery, juggle syllabi, make and post YouTube lectures, and be creative. It will also require faculty to gather and take course materials during an evacuation. The goal is to continue contact instruction during the evacuation period, at a quality-level similar to that delivered prior to the evacuation, so that when Lamar re-opens, calendar adjustments will be made to complete the semester on schedule.

NEXT? All faculty must announce to their students that, in the event of a closure, they are expected to login to their official Lamar email address/Lamar website and, if appropriate, Blackboard course(s) by the fourth day of evacuation and follow all posted directions. Faculty should prepare for such an evacuation and develop academic continuity plans. Faculty meetings are a good place to discuss options and Lamar's Center for Distance Education is happy to assist with training and options.

MODEL SYLLABUS STATEMENT

To effectively implement, every syllabus should include the following statement:

"In the event of an announced campus closure in excess of four days due to a hurricane or other disaster, students are expected to login to Lamar University's website's homepage (www.Lamar.edu) for instructions about continuing courses remotely."

Dear Faculty,

Many of you are preparing your Fall semester course syllabi and I want to remind you of two university requirements. First, please remember to up-load your syllabi and vitae to our website. Texas law (HB 2504) requires that you do so, and many accrediting bodies have similar requirements. The up-load site is very easy to navigate, and the activity will take no more than a couple of minutes. You will need a departmental password to up-load your documents. Many of you have the code; but if not, department chairs and administrative associates have it.

Second, please remember to include a syllabus statement about academic continuity. In the unlikely event that Lamar University closes due to a hurricane or other disaster, and the closure lasts four or more days, instruction will continue electronically. This will allow our students to finish the semester on time and, in some cases, graduate, begin jobs, and move to graduate and professional schools. Every Lamar course has a Blackboard shell and class materials and assignments may be easily up-loaded. There are, of course, other ways to continue instruction, but the point is to continue. Remote education will last until the university reopens. There are other expectations for faculty and students, so please review the university's Academic Continuity Plan (copy attached).

Feel contact me if you have questions about or need assistance with these requirements. Both benefit our students. Thank you for your attention and enjoy the rest of your summer.

Sincerely,

Kevin Smith