



FOR TEACHING



From the desk of the Teaching and Learning Scholar

Student: "I'm so excited for a snow day. I just love sleeping in!"

Faculty: "How am I supposed to make up another missed class? I have to revise the syllabus again!"

It is interesting how the same event can be viewed so differently! Although I used to enjoy cancelled classes as a student, I do not feel the same way as a teacher. When the first storm reports start to appear, (I confess I am addicted to checking the weather app on my phone), I immediately start thinking about contingency plans for my classes. The purpose of this Teaching Tip is to share information related to NMU's inclement weather policy and offer a few ideas for making up missed class time.

For those of you who are new to NMU, there is a link in the references below to the University's inclement weather policy, which has useful information for faculty and students. The related procedure outlines the responsibilities for students who miss class and for faculty who are unable to drive to their course meeting sites. The University offers cancellation notification in several ways such as via instant text alerts, email announcements, a banner notice on the University's home page, and a standard landline recorded message (906-227-BRRR). In addition, various media outlets are notified by 6 a.m. if day classes are cancelled and by 2 p.m. if evening classes are cancelled.

Due to the high probability of inclement weather, faculty might consider having syllabus language that addresses cancelled exams and poor road conditions. I've shared two examples from my syllabi below. Note the NMU inclement weather procedure includes the following statements, "If a student resides in an area where conditions have caused local school closings, then weather should be a factor in excusing that student. For example, if schools in Ishpeming have been closed, a student in that area may well have problems driving into Marquette."

Examples of syllabus language related to inclement weather:

NU 301: You are advised that if NMU cancels class due to inclement weather on a scheduled exam day, that exam will take place at the next regularly scheduled class date. For example, if Monday's exam is cancelled due to weather, the exam will take place on Friday of that same week.

NU 432: If NMU cancels classes due to inclement weather, we will not have clinics or IV start experiences. However, in the event that classes are not cancelled but poor road/travel conditions exist, it is the student's decision whether or not they can safely travel to clinical sites. Please use your best judgment regarding your personal safety. For notification, students may sign up to receive NMU emergency text alerts related to inclement weather or check the University's home page.

So what happens if classes are cancelled? Faculty have several options for making-up a missed lecture class. They could simply post their PowerPoint slides in EduCat and create discussion questions in a related online forum. Faculty could choose to record a missed lecture using video-capture technology such as Camtasia or VoiceThread and share it via EduCat. The Center for Teaching and Learning has several instructional resources available in our online library to assist with recording lectures. Other



options include sharing links to websites or videos. Faculty could design a related online assignment such as asking students to write exam questions or a short reflective paper based on their recorded lectures, links to online resources, or assigned textbook or journal readings. For another assignment, faculty could ask students to submit a detailed outline of a textbook chapter that had been assigned for the missed class.

For courses that require hands-on applications such as labs, clinics, and practicums, figuring out how to make-up missed class time can be a significant challenge. During a five-day blizzard, faculty in an accelerated nursing program, creatively used a variety of methods to keep students on track (Tucker, Bradshaw & Ketcham, 2013). Traditional face-to-face clinical experiences were replaced with virtual experiences, which included short writing assignments based on watching a pertinent television episode, reading patient case studies, reviewing professional websites, and searching for other online resources such as journal publications. Alternate assignments for missed clinical experiences that I have used include textbook or professor created case studies which can be assigned to individuals or small groups. I have also offered additional clinical time (weekend hours) and simulation lab experiences outside of scheduled class times. For cancelled science labs, one option might be to offer some open lab hours at various times throughout the week to allow students the opportunity to complete missed experiments and other related assignments.

Even though spring break is just around the corner, seasoned faculty and experienced Yoopers know spring is indeed weeks away. You might want to create a few contingency assignments for the inevitable cancelled class. Looks like more snow is in the forecast!

References

Northern Michigan University Center for Teaching and Learning (n.d.). *CTL Resource Library*.

<https://www.nmu.edu/ctl/ctl-resource-library>

Northern Michigan University. (October 1, 1986). *Incident weather policy*.

<https://www.nmu.edu/policedepartment/inclement-weather-policy>

Tucker, C. A., Bradshaw, M. J., & Ketcham, N. (2013). Teaching and learning in a winter wonderland.

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