MEMORANDUM
Administrative Services

TO: All Employees of Whatcom Community College
FROM: Nate Langstraat, Vice President for Administrative Services
DATE: Wednesday, November 4, 2020
RE: Inclement Weather Procedure

In the event of inclement weather, employees of the College are encouraged to review WCC’s Inclement Weather Procedure (procedure 708). The procedure can be found attached to this email communication or in the College’s policy and procedure manual as posted online.

This year, implementation of the procedure looks a little different given the primarily remote nature of our work and delivery of instruction. However, there are pockets of on-campus activity occurring, including the Health Professions Education Center, Cedar Hall, and a number of on-campus staff supporting important college operations.

Whatcom Community College will strive to stay open to support these on-campus activities whenever possible, while weighing a number of factors to arrive at a decision to delay the start of operations, close operations early, or suspend operations altogether.

- Maintenance crews are consulted regarding current conditions on campus.
- Current and forecasted weather/road conditions are evaluated for our region.
- Employees living in various parts of the region and county are consulted regarding weather and road conditions in their area.
- Road conditions are assessed via consultation with Public Works (county and city), as well as Department of Transportation reports, traffic cameras, and firsthand knowledge of driving conditions.
- Other institutions and organizations are consulted regarding their inclement weather-related decisions.
- Local school district closures and delays are reviewed and considered.

These are some of the considerations taken into account when the College experiences inclement weather. As always, we understand that individuals must make decisions to protect their own health and safety if conditions make it unsafe to travel to campus. Employees should work with their supervisor and/or division chair to make arrangements in an emergency.

Procedure 708 also identifies that “in the event of inclement weather, all online courses, including the online portion of hybrid courses, will be conducted as scheduled. Closures or delays announced for the Whatcom Community College campus will not apply to online instruction.” This entry takes on additional meaning this year given online courses are the standard mode of delivery right now. Vice President Ed Harri shares additional messaging and considerations related to this passage.
Even with continued instruction during these periods, we know that these events require planning and flexibility for both students and instructors, as we’ve seen recently with numerous power outages. Here are some recommendations to be as prepared as possible for inclement weather disruptions.

- Faculty should develop, and begin to communicate sooner rather than later, an inclement weather plan for their classes that addresses steps a student should take in the event their access to internet is restricted or lost during inclement weather.
- It is strongly encouraged that faculty build in flexibility in deadlines for the entire class during these periods, even while instruction is scheduled to continue. This is particularly valuable for higher stakes assessments scheduled during these periods.
- The instructor should also develop a plan for notifying the class in the event the instructor loses internet access or is unable to regularly update the class due to illness or another reason. A first option should be posting a message to the class in Canvas using a cell phone. If that is not possible, notifying your division chair and Todd Waters with a specific message to be shared with the class can work. Todd would have the ability to post a message to your class in the event you are unable to do so.
- A sample message could read: Hello- As of (insert date), I am unable to connect to Canvas (insert if email and phone are also impacted) due to inclement weather/power outage/illness. You may reach me at (insert if there are communication channels available). At this time the following course assignments continue as scheduled in the syllabus (insert details) and the following will be rescheduled to a later date (insert details). Be safe and stay healthy.

For faculty, staff, and students in health professions programs with in-person instruction:

- Any online instruction scheduled for the date of the campus closure continues as scheduled, with the guidance regarding flexibility listed above.
- If the course is scheduled for on-campus or clinical work on the day of a campus closure, those in-person activities will be cancelled. The instructor will provide guidance on how the instruction will be made up through Canvas. Students should check their Canvas course for up-to-date announcements.

Campus closures or delays due to inclement weather have historically been communicated via the Whatcom Alert system. Again, given the reduced activity on-campus, targeted communications may be used to inform impacted employees and students who are working, studying, or living on-campus, since the campus is already physically closed for the majority of the campus community due to the pandemic.

To sign up for Whatcom Alert, please visit whatcom.edu/emergency for more information and to verify/update your contact information. In incidents when the campus experiences a delayed opening or closure, employees are asked to avoid coming to campus to promote safe conditions and to allow essential staff to focus on inclement weather responsibilities without distraction or disruption.

Thank you for reviewing the inclement weather procedure. Please contact me or Ed with questions.