



Covid-19 Addendum

Continuous Improvement Review 2020

In mid-March the University of Wisconsin-Parkside decided to extend spring break so that faculty could move all classes to online instruction for the remainder of the spring semester. Classes continued in online format throughout the summer. About 38% of UW-Parkside's classes will be face-to-face in the fall. However, approximately 90% of all Department of Business classes will be online.

The financial impact on the entire university was significant. Student fees for residence halls, student center, parking, and sports center were prorated and returned. In addition, the state experienced budget shortfalls such that UW system received a budget lapse. Almost all 12-month employees including College of Business, Economics, and Computing (CBEC) employees were required to take furloughs in the summer. Twelve-month CBEC employees were required to take one day furlough per month.

Taking a conservative approach, UW-Parkside administration decided plan for a base-budget cut rather than a one-year lapse. CBEC's portion of the base-budget cut was 6.9% in FY 2021. Furloughs are not being used during this time period. The Dean was able to absorb the base-budget cut by reallocating faculty lines to other sources of revenue including revenue generated through the online MBA program. While the online MBA program served as a way to mitigate the immediate effects of the budget cut, some plans for hiring may need to be temporarily curtailed.

Spring Response

The faculty, staff, and students of the College of Business, Economics, and Computing (CBEC) worked collaboratively, diligently, and creatively in spring 2020 to transition work and learning to telecommuting and alternative delivery. The primary priorities of this transition were providing an effective learning experience, maintaining student engagement, and continuing with activities necessary for the fall 2020 AACSB continuous improvement review. The challenges included supporting faculty and IAS who were inexperienced in an online environment, reaching out to disengaged students, continuing high impact practices, and finding time for service activities. Since the dean of CBEC was out of the country in early March, Senior Associate Dean, Michele Gee, led CBEC's early transition process through thorough and timely communication. Many faculty and staff started preparing contingency plans early.

CBEC's long experience with distance education through the online MBA programs, online business degree completion program, Flex BSBA, and the project management certificate facilitated the transition. Early in the transition process, CBEC created a college Canvas site to support collaboration. Dr. Suresh Chalasani and Dr. Peter Knight took the early lead on creating the site. Lovina Akowuah and Dr. Terry McGovern were appointed as CBEC faculty mentors and contributed significantly to the site. In addition to links to UW-Parkside and UW Extended Campus resources, instructors uploaded sample content from their classes, and answered questions from colleagues.

In addition to the Canvas site, CBEC hosted twice-weekly virtual meetings (titled Faculty Office Hours) to present alternative delivery strategies and technology tutorials. On average, about 15 faculty, IAS, and adjuncts attended these optional meetings. The facilitator role rotated among faculty and staff. Faculty and IAS used a variety of alternative delivery formats including asynchronous and synchronous online lectures, individual synchronous office hours, and synchronous labs. Technology used to deliver and receive content included Canvas, book publisher learning management systems, podcasts, MS Teams and email. Video conferences were conducted in Collaborate Ultra, Webex, MS Teams, and Zoom. Some CBEC students took the initiative to set up technology and processes to engage with other students outside of class. The variety of course delivery methods appeared to satisfy student needs. Some students preferred asynchronous delivery while others preferred synchronous/live lectures. Several faculty members forwarded email from grateful students.

All faculty and IAS were instructed to include early low stakes quizzes or assignments to assess the initial engagement of the students. The faculty and IAS passed on the names of disengaged students and students with known issues to the department chairs, dean, and CBEC advisors. The CBEC advisors reached out to these students to determine whether they needed any special accommodation including technology. Students with technology issues were connected with computer technology services (CTS). Early engagement in CBEC classes was strong. Most faculty reported that 90% of students were engaged. At least two CBEC “Faculty Office Hours” focused on how to keep students engaged throughout the semester.

While student feedback was generally positive, two areas were mentioned as areas of concern:

- Some students reported that faculty/IAS substituted additional work for traditional class time. These students reported that the additional work made the semester more stressful.
- The lack of consistency in technology was cited as a challenge (e.g., Zoom, Collaborate Ultra, Webex for video conferences).

Example success stories from CBEC can be found in the [UW-Parkside news](#). Parkside Today also interviewed students about their [spring experiences](#). Registrar enrollment reports between March 16 and May 18 indicate that undergraduate students persisted to the end of the semester. However, 58 enrollment seats were lost during that period in the MBA program. Some students chose not to start MBA classes in the second half of the semester. All students including MBA students were granted the option to take a class Pass/Fail.

Faculty and staff appeared to work well in a telecommuting environment. For example, the Department of Business held six highly attended department meetings during the last half of the spring semester. MS Teams was used by the CBEC advisors to coordinate the handling of permission numbers. Staff productivity appeared to be high. Some staff had Internet connection issues and others needed to augment their home work area in order to have an effective and comfortable work environment. All staff members worked effectively online.

Fall Semester

The enrollment in fall semester classes to-date in Business appears strong. The online MBA and Flex BSBA enrolment continues to rise significantly. Most faculty, staff, and advisors prefer to continue to work from home. Additional technology is available for the students with technology needs and spaced

computer labs will be open. All face-to-face classes have been moved to rooms with the capacity for social distancing. Gateway Technical College has donated software licenses to UW-Parkside students so that students in networking classes can work from home.

The DoB will continue “Faculty Office Hours” to further collaboration and continuously improve the learning environment in this format.

AACSB and Continuous Improvement Review

Preparing for a CIR has been a challenge during a pandemic. Time that is normally used to prepare the report and finish gathering information has been usurped slightly by pandemic planning. Obtaining some documentation from faculty is more difficult when the faculty members are not on-campus. Nevertheless, the pandemic has not significantly impacted the department’s ability to meet the standards.

The following areas were impacted slightly:

- Strategic Planning – Planning for an updated strategic plan began in Fall 2019. The pandemic delayed progress on this initiative. However, planning will resume in Fall 2020 with a target date of completion in spring 2021. This will provide adequate time to engage all stakeholders. The DoB expects a slight revision in the mission statement. The extra time is probably useful.
- Assurance of Learning – Data was collected in the spring semester and some analysis has taken place. However, a final review of the data will take place in the fall. This is not seen as a significant issue.
- Intellectual Contributions – A few conference presentations were cancelled in the spring. These cancellations did not seem to seriously impact qualification status.
- Preparation of the materials – Finishing the report was delayed due to the pandemic. However, it will still be turned in on-time. The virtual base camp will likely be delayed by about a week due to pandemic planning.

The PRT have been very accommodating and engaged in understanding our programs and processes. We look forward to working with them on the continuous improvement review.