



THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Office of the Provost and
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

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MEMORANDUM

To: University Community

From: Amy L. Chasteen
Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

CC: Steven R. Moser
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: January 6, 2020

Subject: “Flex periods” for Spring 2020

The academic calendar and meeting patterns for spring 2020 have been adjusted from the prior year’s format, with a slightly longer semester and different class meeting times. As noted in the fall 2019 edition of [Inside the Academy](#), the schedule changes create “flex periods” for anyone teaching full-semester Monday-Wednesday-Friday (MWF) classes.

The MWF classes meet for 60 minutes three times a week, and with the lengthened semester, this pattern includes more than the minimum required contact minutes for the classes. As a result, MWF classes now allow for three “extra” class meetings that offer faculty the flexibility to introduce supportive or supplementary content to enhance their classes. For example:

- Faculty members may use flex periods to cover new content, offer additional review or discussion of class exams or papers, or otherwise expand the material they are able to cover.
- Faculty members can elect to provide students with additional study days without class meetings prior to final exams or other significant assignments.
- Faculty members can invite guests to class to deliver workshops or presentations on topics that impact students’ success in the courses (e.g., note-taking, stress management, writing/speaking skills). *Attached you will find a sample of topics available to instructors for in-class presentations during flex periods*; although not exhaustive, this list offers a good starting point for potential speakers.

The flex period structure is designed to enhance the educational experience of students in the MWF classes, many of which are lower-level courses geared towards students early in their academic careers. We encourage you to take advantage of this additional time during the semester to address the areas in which you most often see students struggle. The three flex periods provide significant additional time to complement the core class content, and we encourage creative approaches to utilization of this new structure. Please feel free to contact me at any time with questions, additional suggestions for in-class workshops, or your own ideas about how to optimize flex periods to improve student outcomes. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Spring 2020: In-Class Workshops/Presentations Available for Flex Periods

Below are some examples of presentations that various offices around campus have prepared to offer in any class. The list is not exhaustive, however, so if you are interested in a related but different topic, please reach out to one of the contact people listed below to discuss your preferences. If you are aware of other workshops or presentations that should be added to this list, please email academic.affairs@usm.edu. Thank you!

1. Understanding USM's Definition of 'Plagiarism' and How to Avoid It
Cindy Blackwell cindy.s.blackwell@usm.edu
Academic Integrity Officer
2. Is It Okay to Get that Online? How Studying Can Become Academic Misconduct
Cindy Blackwell cindy.s.blackwell@usm.edu
Academic Integrity Officer
3. Developing Effective Study Skills for College Classes
Katie McBride Kathleen.McBride@usm.edu
Director, New Student and Retention Programs
4. Time Management Strategies
Katie McBride Kathleen.McBride@usm.edu
Director, New Student and Retention Programs
5. Stress Management for College Students
Lisa Wright lisa.a.wright@usm.edu
Health Educator, Office of Health Promotion
Moffitt Health Center
6. Alcohol and Drug Use, Abuse, and Harm Reduction
Lisa Wright lisa.a.wright@usm.edu
Health Educator, Office of Health Promotion
Moffitt Health Center
7. Body Image, Disordered Eating, and Strategies for Peer Support
Lisa Wright lisa.a.wright@usm.edu
Health Educator, Office of Health Promotion
Moffitt Health Center
8. Note-taking Techniques for Lecture Classes
Katie McBride Kathleen.McBride@usm.edu
Director, New Student and Retention Programs
9. Overcoming Challenges in Hard Classes (Growth Mindset)
Katie McBride Kathleen.McBride@usm.edu
Director, New Student and Retention Programs
10. How the Speaking Center Supports Student Communication
Laura Stengrim Laura.Stengrim@usm.edu
Director, Speaking Center

11. How Students Can Make the Most of the Writing Center
Maria Conti Maravillas M.ContiMaravillas@usm.edu
Director, Writing Center
12. Top Tips for Crafting a Strong Resume – for Job-Seeking and Internships
Rusty Anderson Rusty.Anderson@usm.edu
Director, Career Services
13. Making the Most of the Career & Internship Expo: Tips for Students from Freshman to Senior Year
Rusty Anderson Rusty.Anderson@usm.edu
Director, Career Services
14. How to Find and Obtain the Right Internship – and Why it Matters
Paige Jones Paige.Jones@usm.edu
Director, Center for Pathway Experiences