



## Report on Faculty Input on Emergency Shut-down and Emergency Preparedness Concerns

October 1, 2009

### Executive Summary

In order to help TCC prepare for an emergency situation that shuts down the college, the College Faculty Senate, at the request of President DiCroce, engaged the faculty in a discussion on what percentage of a semester would need to be completed in order to meet academic objectives and protect the college's academic mission.

The varied and complex nature of the college and its programs are reflected in the wide-ranging comments the Senate received, and the data is highly interpretable. Therefore this report includes the individual comments of faculty, and the Senate strongly recommends that faculty be involved in the details of any academic emergency preparedness plan created for their specific disciplines or program. In summary, however, the senate found the following:

- According to the poll addressing percentage of semester completion, 75.6% of faculty judge that completing 90% of a semester would meet academic objectives and protect the college's academic mission, while the remaining 24.4% of faculty judge that 95% completion is necessary. (cf. Table 1)
- There is wide-spread support for using Blackboard to finish out or complete some aspects of course requirements.
- There are significant concerns about meeting accreditation standards, carrying out labs, and completing the skills or the "hands-on" portion of many courses.
- Many disciplines and programs will need to meet the challenge of a shut-down on a very individualized level.

### History

On September 2, 2009, President DiCroce requested that the Faculty Senate provide feedback regarding an emergency shut-down of the college and the academic implications of such a closure. Specifically, faculty were asked to use their professional, academic judgment to determine what percentage of a semester would need to be completed in order to meet academic objectives and protect the college's academic mission.

After discussion at the Sept 3, 2009, College Faculty Senate meeting, it became clear that there was no simple answer; faculty opinions varied as widely as the disciplines and programs at the college. Therefore, in an effort to provide a percentage, include as many faculty voices as possible in the discussion, and begin to reveal the complexity of the academic implications of such a question, the Senate invited all faculty (full-time and adjunct) to vote on percentage completion and provide comments on the Senate Blog. Additionally, the four campus chairs engaged campus faculty individually and in groups to gather more comments and make sure that those faculty not interested in using the blog or poll had the opportunity to comment.

Votes, data, and comments are gathered and reported below. Full-time and adjunct faculty were queried and both populations are part of the sample.

## Poll

The poll allowed faculty to answer the following question in 5% increments from 95% to 60%:

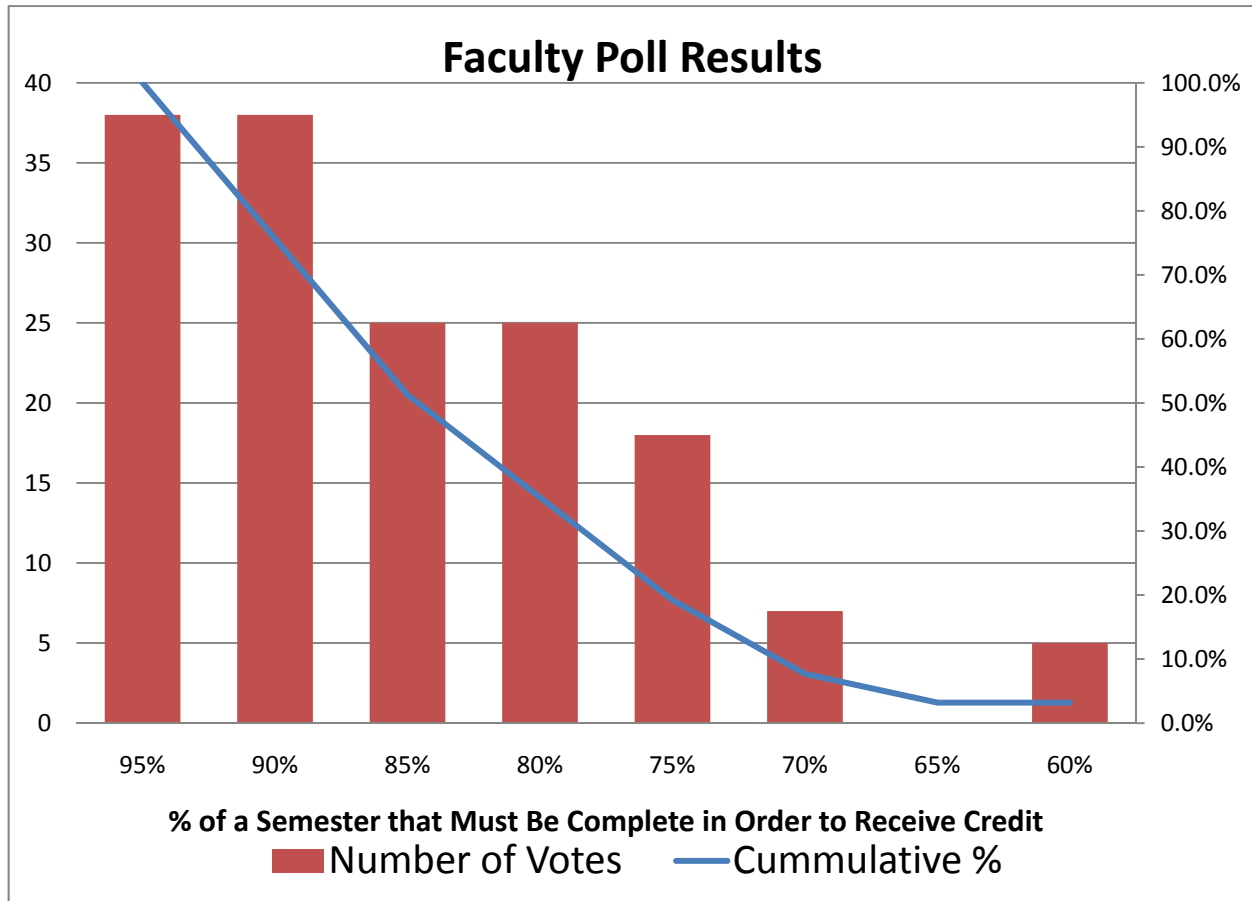
*Based on your professional and academic judgment as a faculty member, what percentage of a semester would need to be completed in order to meet academic objectives and protect the college's academic mission in the event of an emergency situation that shutdown the school?*

Table 1 includes votes gathered on the blog and emailed separately.

% of Classes Completed	Votes	% of Votes	Running Total
95%	38	24.4%	100.0%
90%	38	24.4%	75.6%
85%	25	16.0%	51.3%
80%	25	16.0%	35.3%
75%	18	11.5%	19.2%
70%	7	4.5%	7.7%
65%	0	0.0%	3.2%
60%	5	3.2%	3.2%

Table 1

Table 2



## **Comments**

In addition to the poll, faculty were asked to comment on the following questions that were posted to the blog. Responses were submitted directly to the blog, as well as via e-mail and personal conversations with Senators.

*Recognizing that any emergency shutdown is less than ideal, in the event of an emergency that demanded closing the college for a period of time, what challenges would your discipline or program face?*

*Based on your academic expertise, how could the college best plan to meet the academic needs of your students?*

*Could you meet the academic needs of the students using Blackboard or other online technology?*

*If your discipline or program demands hands-on proficiency or labs, how could those challenges be met?*

*In the event that your campus or center was shutdown, does your discipline or course have unique needs that are not available at other TCC campuses? What are they? Please share your ideas or concern here.*

## **Comments from the Blog:**

### **Michael said...**

Depends on the nature of the emergency. Hurricanes, power outages, bomb threats, we've dealt with before. In a post 9-11 environment, longer term shutdowns could include terrorist/biowar/state-sponsored attacks, pandemics, economic collapse, martial law, etc. If it's any of the above, I'd imagine most people (faculty included) will be busy coping with the emergency. Hard to tell how many students would take/attend/be concerned about classes under those circumstances. Use of blackboard and distance learning tools are doable in less threatening scenarios but if the emergency involves long term power outages or strains safety nets, then it'd be advised to just shut down. Closest the college has come to my last example was hurricane Isabel where large numbers of people lost power for a week or more. Roads were impassible in some parts of the region. Gasoline supplies were strained and fortunately it was all ending after a short time. In lab sciences that could be a problem for successful completion. Where's this topic going?

September 8, 2009 7:07 PM

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### **Doris said...**

This is somewhat of a conundrum as circumstances that could precipitate such a closing are varied. However, if faculty can assign an I grade for certifiable reasons at a 75% completion rate, perhaps that is a bench mark. That would give faculty and students an additional semester to complete the course, but obviously face to face could prove difficult. Therefore, it might behoove everyone to at least have a Blackboard shell in which to post assignments that need to be completed in a given time frame. Granted, as

an English instructor, this is easier than for a lab science/math etc, but extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures, bending maybe but realistic in our population.

September 8, 2009 7:55 PM

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**Elizabeth said...**

If the H1N1 flu creates an emergency shut down, I could turn my face to face lectures into online courses using blackboard. Science labs would be more of a challenge-for Bio 101, 102 there are virtual labs and virtual dissections that could be completed by the students. Anatomy labs would be difficult.

If the emergency were a hurricane with widespread disruption of power and services, then I am afraid everyone would be too busy with the emergency to worry about class. My bottom line would be 90% completion of the course for credit.

September 8, 2009 8:14 PM

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**Maureen said...**

I have to agree with Doris; 75% completion seems reasonable for English/Reading. If the H1N1 flu creates an emergency shut down, I could move all lectures and assignments to Blackboard.

September 8, 2009 9:37 PM

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**Dianne said...**

It seems that Blackboard availability would be key to completing the courses. Doris makes a reasonable suggestion; 75% completion rate seems fair for English classes.

September 9, 2009 6:55 AM

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**Jim R. said...**

Unless the emergency involves a long-term electrical outage over a broad area, Blackboard may be our silver bullet. My concern is that all courses have BB shells and that faculty are capable of using them appropriately.

Emergency preparedness, then, should include a focus on faculty training IN ADVANCE. BB has evolved into a very flexible but complex tool that it takes some time to use well. Training will ideally be more than technical: it should include pedagogical dimensions. With appropriate training, Blackboard could -ironically enough- become an essential part of preserving academic integrity!

September 9, 2009 11:29 AM

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**Richard said...**

Since most mathematics classes depend heavily on students knowing the prerequisite material, I feel that students should be required to cover virtually all of the material. This might mean incompletes, using online material or using other facilities as necessary.

September 11, 2009 7:57 AM

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**Kim E said...**

I can foresee my developmental classes having some issues with Blackboard since I don't use it in class. My ENG 1 and 3 classes are very much group/participation oriented. That said, though, I think we would survive if the school was shut down for less than two weeks.

September 17, 2009 12:22 PM

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**Robert Harrison said...**

As a Librarian its our job to supplement the programs offered here at TCC. The library is generally open when the school is and we are more than able to handle to adapt to change situations. It would depend on the type of emergency as to how we would respond. Loss of power would greatly affect us as we do the bulk of our teaching viz the internet and other technologies.

September 18, 2009 10:56 AM

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**Fran said...**

In history, most of the class should be completed (95%). This could be done by Blackboard in the event of an emergency; but in the event of the power outages that so many have pointed to, the idea of an "I" seems like a viable alternative, with a longer makeup time than one semester.

I don't see a "completed" US I course that does not cover the Civil War, and a US II course should reach the end of the Cold War. Western Civ professors often differ in their ending to WCI, and WC II is not as difficult to finish as US because Europe retreated somewhat after WWII.

September 18, 2009 1:31 PM

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**Anonymous said...**

I'm not sure percentages are a sufficient gauge for or an accurate one depending on the subject matter. If my students have learned the basics of analysis and the construction of argument, then the completion of specific content seems less necessary. But obviously this is going to differ across the disciplines.

September 21, 2009 9:09 AM

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**Mark said...**

Along the lines of what Doris said, since we have the authority to drop students when they fail to attend 20% or more of the class meetings, it would seem to me that unless we can provide at least 80% of a course, we could not in good conscience assign a grade in the course (other than I). Giving out I grades in vast numbers would pose its own challenges to both the College and the faculty (not to mention the students).

The concept that we would require (force?) everyone to take BB training "just in case" seems rather unrealistic to me. There are too many courses for which BB, or online in general, just would not work. What about students who had the option of taking a course online, and made a conscious decision not to. Can we force them to finish their course online?

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September 21, 2009 10:19 AM

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**BonnieS said...**

I think the 80% mark seems the most reasonable as that is the number we have in student handbook as suggested attendance required to pass. Although I agree that the type of emergency will affect the decision. The I suggested by Doris is helpful, or we might add classes at the beginning of the return to school to allow the class to be completed---exams and final papers.

September 21, 2009 10:44 AM

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**Anonymous said...**

I like the idea that we are planning for this possibility. However, I do not see the truncation of a course as an acceptable option. I would prefer using the Internet to complete a partially completed course. The questions I would ask are:

- 1) at what point in a face-to-face class could you stop meeting and finish on-line?
- 2) what tools would you need?  
(e.g. Blackboard, e-mail, on-line conferencing, pod-casts, telephone, etc.)
- 3) are you skilled enough to use these tools - if not what training do you need?

September 21, 2009 1:12 PM

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**Debbie said...**

In theory, I agree with the 80% as a realistic number since that is our default attendance standard. However, my concern in such a scenario is that it would be 20% all at once. When students miss a day here and a day there throughout the semester, the effect would not be as severe as missing the entire last three weeks of a 15-week semester. I would hazard a guess and say that most students who do that fail and rightly so. It may be much more of a concern for those of us who teach skill-building courses within an extended sequence. When I think about what students miss by missing the last 20% of one of the courses in our sequence and the effect this would have on their success in the follow-on course, I come down on the 90% side as being in the better interests of the student.

September 21, 2009 1:55 PM

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**Sylvia R said...**

Eighty percent because we require 75% successful completion of a course before a student is eligible for an Incomplete.

September 21, 2009 2:41 PM

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**Anonymous said...**

The course outline states what must be accomplished to complete the course material. Especially, when you are dealing with college transfer courses (which are dictated by the

university the student is transferring to!).

Peter

September 21, 2009 6:25 PM

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**Anne said...**

According to our syllabus, state requirements for the completion of the EMS courses is 85% in order to test National Registry. I agree with Debbie who has a concern about missing an entire section of the course. Didactic material can be done on BB, since most EMS classes use BB, but skills portion which is also required for testing would suffer. Would we still have the capabilities to do clinicals, even though the campus is closed? This would greatly impact completion of our program. We do have some off site classes that are equipped with needed equipment that could be used in an emergency for practical labs. I would say that we need at least 90% of class completed.

September 22, 2009 2:28 PM

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**Kim Bovee, Chair CFS said...**

I'd like to thank everyone for their participation and thoughtful comments on this blog. The faculty senate will be gathering these comments as well as those received via direct email and passing them on to the senate for a vote of acceptance. We will then pass those comments on to the President and Peter Sommer, the Director of Emergency Preparedness. You can track these actions as they progress on the Faculty Senate Log:

<http://tcc.edu/welcome/collegeadmin/gov/facsen/SenateLOG.htm>

September 23, 2009 8:44 PM

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**BonnieS said...**

Kim and all, I would like to propose that we perhaps consider teaching the next semester as a dynamic and finish the previous semester in the time we cut off.

September 24, 2009 9:28 AM

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**Felicia said...**

A huge consideration would be the ability to continue with clinical education components of health professions programs. This would be a sensitive consideration if the safety of students became an issue. Without clinical education components in place the continuation of didactic classes for my program is useless. F

September 24, 2009 11:58 AM

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**Comments gathered from the faculty at the Portsmouth Campus by the Campus Senate Chair, Roberta Bernardini**

Roger:               concerned how this conflicts with the existing policy on % for missing class

Richard: developmental now says can miss 75%; Can give an I.  
Melvin: will need to cover material  
Melinda: nursing...we cannot miss content  
Kathy: with 8 week courses it is impossible to miss time  
Denise: our program in nursing does not allow time to be missed without makeup  
Debra: even though I can do computer classes on line I need them in class  
Gabrilla: they must finish all content of languages before they can take the next course  
101 then 102  
Jim: feels can make up time in Biology  
Laura: my biology class does not allow time to be missed  
Laura: developmental math requires them to get the help they need

### **Comments gathered from the faculty of the Regional Automotive Center by David Howell**

Since our group is small, I held an impromptu meeting today to cover the various scenarios of a student/faculty outage at the RAC.

Each week lost in our typical 8-week session represents a larger percentage of time missed than "normal" 16-week courses of study, so having a contingency plan is important.

Students missing one week is easy, and they can easily get notes, etc from their fellow students or their instructor.

Instructors missing more than one week does put us in more of a bind, initially, because of the required NATEF face-to-face lab sessions. While we can add additional online classes to help the students in our absence, the lab time is not as easily dealt with, because of a lack of qualified degreed ASE-certified Master Technicians required for the aforementioned NATEF classification.

It is much harder to hire someone with the above credentials in our field because most of the employable techs with BS/MS/Phd degrees are making more than 100K/yr, and do not want a pay cut!

For the most part, the additional lab hours will be done in the following 8-week session, or between the extended Winter break time schedule so as not to give undue amount of "Incompletes".

As for "how much time" can be missed, most of us believe that 10% or less should be the norm, which would be a few hours from the week.

This disruption should not be any bigger than it is in a 4-year institution.

**Comments gathered and statistics broken down by disciplines at the Chesapeake Campus by Kim Edwards and Kelly Gillerlain**

80% Biology  
75% Accounting  
90% Languages  
70% Horticulture  
75-80% Math (with one outlier at 100%)  
75% Chemistry  
80% English  
75% Business  
80-85% Automotive (reflective of federal guidelines)  
85% History

23 responses

One Accounting instructor brought up the fact that she would consider a C or better during an abbreviated semester to be passing. She thought that someone who had a D at that point would quite definitely not have the knowledge needed.

**Comment received via email:**

Easy to answer...If the TCC handbook states a maximum 20% absentee rate (which I believe to be much too high as a guideline) then this would suggest TCC would accept 80% completed rate for the semester.

Note: The guide line should be made tighter with an acceptable rate of 1 absence per credit hour as the norm and then the acceptable percentage would be about 96%..