



## Academic Update (COVID-19)

March 24, 2020

Dear Students and Families,

Thank you for the tremendous support as we have transitioned Foxcroft Academy to a remote learning institution in response to the emerging COVID-19 crisis. Now that we are all beginning to establish our “new normal”, we wanted to reach out with some updates about how our academic system and expectations are adapting along the way.

First, there are some “big picture” elements that, along with our mission, vision, and guiding principles, are serving as a compass to guide our decision making in this uncharted territory. Perhaps our biggest priority at this time is to “do no harm” to student learning outcomes. We understand that school closure is a tremendous disruption, not only to the academic experience, but also to student social and emotional norms (and of course family routines and our community at large). We are working to retain as many of our regular expectations as possible while acknowledging the significance of our paradigm shift to remote learning and the background context of the ongoing local, state, national, and global COVID-19 crisis. Our hope is that with good communication and ongoing support we will minimize the negative impacts and perhaps even strengthen the bonds of this incredible school community that is the Pony Herd.

### **Connection, Engagement, and Social-Emotional Support**

As we’ve now completed our first week of remote learning, we have noticed that many students have connected in some way or another with at least one of their classes. However, we have heard from teachers that there is room for improvement in the regularity of student communication and participation.

Here are the actions we are taking to support students:

- ***Teachers have been prompted to reach out directly to parents/guardians via phone to check in if students haven’t yet been participating as much as expected.*** Our goal with these check-ins is to make sure we establish expectations

for continued academic progress while at the same time learning what barriers may be limiting students, so that we can work together on solutions.

- ***Student advisors will do weekly check-ins on advisees' academic, social, and emotional well-being.*** Advisors will then, as appropriate, coordinate supportive responses with parents, teachers, school counselors, and others.
- ***Our Counseling Services team stands ready to support students remotely, via email, phone, or videoconference.*** Guidance is being provided to all students, and individual support in collaboration with parents, teachers, and others is a top priority in this stressful time.

### **Teaching and Learning**

Though we are fortunate and grateful to be as well-positioned as we are to make the transition to remote - online - learning, we want to be candid: we are learning and adapting as we go. There is a tremendous difference between technology integration in the face-to-face classroom and the wholesale transition to using technology as the foundation for learning at a distance.

Here are the actions we are taking to support teaching and learning:

- ***Instruction will continue, as in Week 1, with asynchronous learning opportunities.*** In other words, we will not expect students to connect with their coursework on a specific schedule, so that we can honor the flexibility that students and families may need at this time. With that said, while there is not an externally-imposed schedule at this time, it is essential for each student and family to develop a personalized schedule for continued daily engagement with academics.
- ***Instruction and related assessments will, to the best of our abilities, be limited to the amount of time that the student would be in that particular class for a week.*** We have asked our teachers to seek feedback from students this week so that we can calibrate our efforts so that there's neither too little nor too much work required. This will take us some time to get "just right", and is going to rely on constructive communication among all involved.

### **Grading and Reporting**

There can be no question that our transition to remote learning in the context of the COVID-19 crisis introduced a significant variable into our standards- and proficiency-based grading system. We are working to ensure that our grades remain valid and reliable indicators of what students know and are able to do with respect to course-specific learning targets.

Here are the actions we are taking on grading and reporting:

- ***Grading will remain focused on proficiency and relative to standards, with teachers making decisions as appropriate about which expectations to hold and which to release.*** For example, we will hold to Academic Initiative expectations across the board, and to almost all content standards generally, but will need to let

go of some expectations that relate to hands-on learning (particularly in lab science and industrial technology courses). Teachers are working hard to find reasonable enrichments for the things we need to let go of at this time, and will be sure to communicate any modifications to expectations so that learning targets remain clear to our students.

- **Teachers will be flexible with assessment deadlines as appropriate on a case-by-case basis.** Regular academic supports such as retake opportunities remain in place. We are working to develop a systematic approach to remote “Pony Time” (virtual office hours) to provide one-on-one / small group support opportunities while understanding that our teachers also need flexibility at this time (many of us are also parents with children now at home, too). For now, please communicate and coordinate academic support needs and plans directly with the teacher.
- **Q3 grades for year-long and second-semester courses will not be collected, nor reported on transcripts.** We may put a placeholder in for all students, such as “COV”, to acknowledge the disruption rather than leaving it blank. P4 progress reports will be based on assessments through May 1, and distributed on/by May 8. Final grades for year-long and second-semester courses will, as usual, be collected and reported in Q4 at the end of this academic year.

#### **Graduation Requirements (all students)**

At this time, all graduation requirements remain in place for all students. There are no changes to course credit requirements nor to the student portfolio expectation.

Here are the actions we are taking to support Library Reading and Community Service:

- **Books for Library Reading can still be obtained from the Foxcroft Academy library.** Please contact Mrs. Taggart via email ([tina.taggart@foxcroftacademy.org](mailto:tina.taggart@foxcroftacademy.org)) to inquire about the availability of a book. Books can be checked out remotely and delivered to your home via bus service. Expectations remain the same: one book per year of enrollment at FA. This is a great time to get lost in a book, and this time of school closure is a tremendous opportunity for students to catch up on this requirement if behind pace.
- **Community Service can now include the unpaid work students are doing to support their homes and families.** Please document time spent caring for and/or tutoring younger children in the home. Parents/guardians, please email Jennifer Dunton ([jennifer.dunton@foxcroftacademy.org](mailto:jennifer.dunton@foxcroftacademy.org)) to inform us of the number of hours and the service provided. We will document these hours in PowerSchool and they will count toward the Community Service graduation requirement (36 hours total with at least 12 in the senior year) as well as the Community Service Award.

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## **Class of 2020 Portfolio Presentations and Graduation Honors**

Despite our closure due to the COVID-19 crisis, we remain focused on celebrating the tremendous accomplishments of the Class of 2020.

Here are the actions we are taking for our Senior class:

- ***Portfolio presentations may be recorded and submitted to student advisors for completion.*** Although we are sure we are closed through April 27th, the actual duration of the closure remains indefinite and dependent upon future guidance from the CDC and DOE. As such, if students are interested in completing their presentation by recording audio over their slides, they may submit that file to their advisor to complete the requirement. We are working on the possibility of arranging live, remote presentations via Google Hangouts Meet for students who are interested, though details remain to be determined.
- ***GPA-based graduation honors will be determined using Q2 data.*** Normally these honors (valedictorian, salutatorian, Rose Awards, and Latin Honors) are determined using Q3 grades, but the COVID-19 crisis has introduced too much variability for us to even record Q3 grades, let alone use them for such important decisions. We will rely on our most recent reliable data, Q2 grades, to make these decisions. We will follow the same process as would normally happen in Q3; grades from Q2 in year-long classes will be treated as final grades for the purposes of determining these honors. Regretfully, grades from second-semester courses will not be a factor in these decisions because Q3 grades will not be collected or recorded.
- ***The deadline for Community Service Award determination has been extended to April 10, 2020.*** Normally this award is given to students who have completed their Community Service graduation requirement by the end of Q3 and who have a total of 100 or more service hours documented at that time. We are keeping the expectations for the award in place, but extending the deadline and allowing for home-based service (communicated as described above) documented by April 10th to count toward this award.

Once again, thank you for the tremendous support you have offered in this stressful and uncertain time as we change to remote education. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,



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