Further Questions Concerning Online Learning During and After the Pandemic

Near-term: The following questions relate primarily to the coming term as schools transition into the next phase of pandemic-inflected reality. For many, this term will mean temporary approaches that enhance the initial emergency response but are not yet fully designed online programs.

1. Which courses are absolutely essential to the school's mission and student formation, and which courses might be put on hold for the time being?

2. Have you worked with faculty to prepare courses for the next term? Do they have the necessary support (technical aid, access to content, help following up with students, etc.)?

3. Have faculty had an opportunity to share their successes and challenges with each other? Do they have opportunities for peer mentoring as they plan for the coming term?

4. How will online programs affect the budget? Will you need to offer tuition reductions to students who had planned to study face-to-face but now will be online? Will limited course offerings affect the budget (if applicable)?

Long-term: Designing a fully online program can require 12-36 months of planning. It will also affect nearly every aspect of how the school functions. The following questions can help the school prepare for this long-term investment.

Mission

1. How do online programs fit with the school's mission? What challenges and opportunities do you see as you integrate mission with the realities of online education?

Approach to Teaching and Learning

2. Has your school – leadership, faculty, and staff – articulated and agreed upon a teaching philosophy that ranks priorities for online education?

3. In particular, how does this teaching philosophy address holistic formation in an online environment? How will your online courses help students arrive at a rich understanding of their personal relationship with Christ, their role in local ministry, and their connection to the Global Church?

4. Will your program take place completely virtually, or will it include intensive face-to-face interactions in a hybrid model? Will new online offerings change the institution's student profile?

5. How will online courses prepare students for their professions? How will course design contribute to students' formation for ministry – via live or recorded lectures, live discussions, chat postings, tests, writing assignments, practical exercises, and so forth?

6. How will course designs need to change as courses move from the current term's minimal formats to more creative mixtures of learning activities?

7. How will the school plan for students to fulfill practicum requirements – mission trips, service-learning components, shadowing, etc. – from a distance?

Faculty

8. How do faculty function in online environments? Have you spoken to each of your faculty members about how they have made the immediate switch? Have you talked to them about how you can help them prepare for long-term teaching in the virtual environment?

9. To what extent are faculty trained to teach online courses? What further training do they need for designing and managing online courses? Have you assessed their experiences during the emergency shift so that you know what gaps they have encountered in their ability to teach online?

10. Do faculty need technical support for using online platforms and video software, etc.?

11. How will online courses impact faculty members' workloads? Have they been given extra time to redevelop courses? How will you help faculty balance online and in-person responsibilities?

12. Will the school provide support through tutors or teaching assistants who can help manage courses developed by faculty?

Infrastructure

13. What is the state of the school's IT infrastructure (personnel, equipment, systems, maintenance, training)? What needs to be done to improve these for the coming term (if anything)?

14. Do students have adequate access to internet, computers, online libraries, and so forth? What steps do you need to take to ensure equal access for all students?

15. Does the school have a learning management software in place? Do student and faculty require additional training to use it effectively?

16. What is the state of the school's electrical power and internet bandwidth? What can the institution do to improve these for the coming term (if anything)?

17. Does the school have support for class production (video, audio, design, programming, posting in a learning management system, etc.)?

18. Does the school have or need to plan for virtual library resources? Do students know how to access them and can they do so easily from remote locations?

Finances

19. Will you need to create a new tuition rate for online learning?

20. Will you need to hire tutors or teaching assistants to support faculty?

21. How will IT support affect the budget? Will you need to purchase new equipment, increase bandwidth, acquire software, etc.? Will you need to hire additional IT support?