



Outlook

Monday Matters: Update on the Forward Focused Digital Initiative

From Dodge, Gail <gdodge@odu.edu>
Date Mon 10/13/2025 8:00 AM
To Dodge, Gail <gdodge@odu.edu>
Cc Whitfield, Tiffany L. <tlwhitfi@odu.edu>

Dear Colleagues:

At the faculty forum one week ago President Hemphill presented the rationale for the comprehensive digital initiative that is currently underway. Higher education faces a perfect storm of challenges, including changing demographics, rising costs, increased scrutiny of the value of a college education, and federal changes that may affect research funding as well as financial aid in some disciplines. At ODU total enrollments have declined approximately 10% in the last decade, while we have experienced growth in online enrollment. The SCHEV productivity review has flagged 21 programs for potential closure due to low enrollment, triple the number from the 2013 review. Meanwhile, Virginia Tech is preparing to increase its enrollment significantly over the coming years, which will obviously affect ODU. Numerous universities are trying to implement budget cuts to manage the situation.

The President made it clear that at ODU we will not be cutting our way out of this situation. The switch to 8 week asynchronous courses (A8) will help us compete for online students, especially adult learners and degree completers. We do not have the luxury of waiting until Fall 27 to implement this change and our registrar has made it clear that it is not feasible to run our online programs in a mixture of 8 and 15 week formats.

This A8 transition is underway and will require a significant amount of work to be ready for Fall 2026. Accordingly, I wanted to provide an update on activities in our college to manage this transition.

- Recently, Bonnie Van Lunen (Senior Associate Vice President for Academic Innovation) and Chrysa Malogianni (Senior Associate Vice President for Digital Innovation) met with our college Department Chairs to answer questions and discuss plans for faculty to work with ODU Global on course conversions.
- Provost Brian Payne has attended faculty meetings in three of our departments and will visit the others as soon as possible.
- The process of planning for our fully online programs to transition to the 8 week format is moving ahead. We are still working out some of the details for our supporting/general education courses. Associate Dean Josh Wallach is assisting departments with planning and scheduling as needed.
- President Hemphill and Provost Payne will attend a college chairs meeting later this fall.

The transition to 8 week accelerated courses is only one part of the plan. ODU will upgrade the technology in our classrooms, establish new Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality labs, and employ AI tools to assist students earlier in the semester. New AI and cloud computing tools will become available to support our research enterprise. These and other changes are designed to attract students to ODU, support their retention and success, and assist faculty in teaching and research.

This is a period of major change but at ODU we are rising to the challenge. I am very grateful for the hard work of all faculty and staff in supporting ODU's mission and future success.

Best Regards,
Gail

College calendar: <https://www.odu.edu/sci/calendar>

Upcoming Events and Deadlines:

Nov. 7 (4 – 5:30): Science Friday – Speakers: Mary Still (PSYC) and Rishi Drolia (BIOL)
[PSB 1100]

Dec. 8 (11:30 – 1:30): College of Sciences Holiday Party [Priority Club, S.B. Ballard Stadium]