

reimagine our politics courses in ways that not only engage and excite graduate students but also recognize them as fellow scholars with unique experiences—both privileges and discriminations—and thus often unique needs. Doing so will have benefits that far outlast the rapid and improvised shift to online learning.

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WHEN GOOD ENOUGH IS GOOD ENOUGH: DEPARTMENT CHAIRING DURING COVID-19

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Emergencies are unexpected and dangerous, and they require quick action. They also are, admittedly, opportunities for "securitization" (Murphy 2020) and fraught with additional difficulties. When I took over as chair of my department in 2019, I had no idea we would be experiencing a pandemic in 2020. My philosophy as a department chair during this pandemic then and even now (because the United States as a national community has utterly failed to confront the pandemic effectively and safely) is to simply get by and do a good-enough job. It is the same philosophy of the NCAA basketball tournament: survive and advance. We hear the phrase that "perfect is the enemy of the good," but I would amend that by saying the "good is (also) the enemy of good enough."

I ground my understanding of "good enough" by following Schick's (2012, 129) Gillian Rose-inspired book. Schick's approach

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is "agonistic," one that "does not assume that we can take linear steps towards a better future, but it does not retreat from action... knowing that any such action will need to be revisited and revised in the light of its inevitable unintended consequences." The temporal horizon for this approach is clear, not a long-term resolution but rather a "good enough" one "in the here and now" (Schick 2012, 129). In this article, I share both what this good-enough approach looked like in my own emergency experience and takeaways for those in leadership positions regarding the benefits and drawbacks going forward.

In early March 2020, with the increased pace of universities worldwide shifting to online, my advisory team and I began

planning for the possibility—and then the likelihood—of doing the same for our department, courses, and students. When the university announced that we were transitioning to online, I sent an email to our department to provide all of the information I had at that time. I emphasized from the beginning that their priorities should be centered around their own health and the health of their family. If they got sick or they had family members to tend to, we reassured our colleagues that we could assist them in covering their classes. I was reminded of my own vulnerability to the virus one week into the online switch when I filled out a "succession" form to name who would assume chair duties if I became incapacitated by or died of COVID-19.

After we transitioned, I sent a weekly department email throughout the spring to summarize the highlights from the wave of emails we received from various offices and leaders at the University of Utah, as well as "leaders luncheon" "town hall" meetings for chairs with central administration.

Our department handled the transition effectively. Leading up to the pandemic, I had worked with our graduate director and graduate adviser to hire our technology-proficient graduate students to assist instructors, including Seth Wright and Zach Stickney as "tech TAs," in the transition. Our fairly collegial unit also includes instructors who are adept at online teaching. In addition to the two tech TAs we provided, our tech-savvy colleagues including David Carter and Marjorie Castle proved to be great resources for the department whenever an instructor with a recently "flipped" course had a question.

Still, some colleagues had questions about the broader impact of the pandemic; others had administrative questions regarding classes. I took most of these one-on-one conversations on the phone (to alleviate Zoom fatigue) usually when I was walking my dog in the afternoon. Considering the financial impact of the pandemic on state revenues, colleagues were anxious about their job security; others were concerned about tenure clocks. To handle the former, I tried to relay information from central administration as clearly as possible in the phone conversations without promising with certainty what the road ahead might entail. The latter concern was addressed by central administration in a helpful decision to extend junior faculty clocks by a year—on request, no questions asked.

The challenges of the spring semester were daunting but proved to be manageable. Students responded favorably to instructors—our course evaluations were the best on record. By early May, faculty, students, and administrators were turning their attention to the fall semester and to the question of whether a return to campus would happen.

Such uncertainty consumed the summer of 2020. The university has increasingly expanded the criteria for instructors who want to teach remotely while also being attentive to the importance of student preferences for in-person teaching. The latter shapes enrollments, important for the financial health of the university. All of this has only led to further uncertainty.

Our fiscal numbers in the state are not catastrophic; neither are they great. Our cases of COVID-19 are spiking in Utah—a state that previously effectively handled the pandemic. Yet, with a US presidential election and the necessarily charged atmosphere resulting from the Black Lives Matter protests, political science enrollments have already set a record for the fall. Political science is not an industry, it is a vocation. We must find ways to help these students navigate the political world that has proven to be far more important in shaping the response to this pandemic than anything else.

For department chairs who are handling this emergency situation going forward, I suggest the following six “good-enough” practices:

- If you are at a research institution (as I am), recognize that there is a bifurcation in research productivity happening throughout the academic world. Some scholars are not producing any research. I am a parent first, a department chair second, and a research scholar third. I am not getting any research done—at all. Yet, other faculty are using this new format as a quasi-sabbatical and accomplishing a lot. Some of this breaks down along gender lines (Weigand et al. 2020). Be sensitive to this and advocate for maximum flexibility for your research faculty regarding timelines for tenure and promotional reviews in the coming years.
- Although many colleagues appreciate the flexibility of the good-enough approach, others are perfectionists or prefer

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- People care most about their jobs, their health, and their families. Prioritize these when relaying the prospects for cuts or furloughs and for the provisions made by a university or your department in protecting the health (mental, emotional, and physical) and safety of instructors, graduate assistants, and staff. In turn, communicate that any obstacles regarding colleagues’ pay, job security, and health will be attended to immediately.
- Consider regular but not too frequent communications to all department instructors, teaching assistants, and staff. Resist the urge to appear “on top” of the situation with constant communication. Less frequent but detailed updates streamline and summarize the deluge of emails from central administration and also highlight other information that has been shared in town hall meetings between chairs and higher administration.
- Avoid the temptation to overdo contingency planning. There will be long-term drawbacks to the good-enough approach; that is, strategic plans will need to be postponed to a more certain time. However, our energy is being sapped daily and relentlessly by this dynamic situation. Even planning for “scenarios” in this fluid time is difficult and borderline quixotic. Furthermore, communicate this reality to higher-ups in your university administrative structure who otherwise consistently use strategic planning.
- Teaching evaluations will be haphazard. Flexible instructors likely will be rewarded for their understanding and empathetic approach to their students and classes. However, students who feel they are being “shorted” tuition value by the adjusted formats of online teaching during the pandemic may take it out on the instructors in their evaluations. Recognizing that your faculty members also are under pressure in various life roles (e.g., instructor, scholar, and parent), advocate for those who are using the good-enough approach in their teaching. Address how course evaluations should be used (or not) in their own assessments and reviews.

a more controlling, confident, and certain approach. I have witnessed this in some of my colleagues. They will be frustrated with this type of leadership, as some are with me. So be it. Doing good enough inevitably entails dealing with the disappointment and disapproval of colleagues. Some of us, however, do not need to be a perfect department chair. We just need to get by.

We remain in an emergency situation. The actor with agency, the one securitizing the entire situation, however, remains the virus. Until COVID-19 is resolved or defeated, I am not going to be perfect. I am going to be just good enough. ■

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CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: WHAT CAN(T) WE RESEARCH ABOUT EMERGENCY E-LEARNING?

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The interventions in this spotlight draw attention to various ways that political science and international relations experienced the emergency e-learning transition in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. By way of conclusion, I turn to the questions still to be asked about pandemic pedagogy and what lessons it might hold for teaching and learning. Although