




Professor Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer

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**TO:** Boston University Faculty and Graduate Teaching Fellows  
**FROM:** Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer   
**DATE:** December 23, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** Spring 2021 LfA Adjustments

As we enter the holiday season and a well-earned break, I want to thank each of you for the dedication, patience, and resilience that you have demonstrated over the past year. Thanks to you, Boston University has successfully concluded the year and met our dual goals of keeping our community safe and allowing our students to continue their academic advancement. I hope that you take time to relax and recharge over the coming weeks and please know how much your work is appreciated and recognized.

When the University prepared to reopen classrooms in August 2020, we faced many unknowns. Now, with months of pandemic teaching and learning under our belts, we have collectively gained much insight. There have been no known cases of transmission of the virus in normal classroom settings at BU, providing reassurance that our extensive safety protocols have worked. Surveys revealed that students value and are generally satisfied with in-person learning and often prefer it to remote learning, and that they eagerly crave connection, community, and interactions with their peers and professors. While this seems to run counter to the observation that many students living locally opted to attend class remotely, we believe that it is our responsibility to work to bring those students into the classroom. The words *community*, *relationship*, *interaction*, and *connection* were among the most frequent words written in the student surveys, appearing far more often than words such as *wifi* or *classroom*. This feedback is in line with Boston University's deep commitment to residential, in-person learning, with respect to both individual courses and the aggregate educational experience of our students.

Looking forward to the spring 2021 semester, the continued presence of COVID-19 requires that we continue to utilize Learn *from* Anywhere as the instructional modality. Over the past month several of the University's Recovery Working Groups, made up of faculty and administrators, have reviewed feedback from [faculty and student surveys](#) to determine how we can improve the LfA teaching and learning experience for the spring 2021 semester. While the basics of LfA will remain, I outline below several adjustments that we believe will improve the experience for both faculty and students, including:

- Clarified options for implementing LfA
- Implementation of new cohorting app

- Additional investment in faculty support (Faculty Coaches, Classroom Moderators)
- Audit of classrooms, technology improvements where possible

### **Options for Implementation**

The goal when planning LfA courses for the spring semester should be to maximize opportunities for students to have the richest possible in-person educational experiences, should they choose to embrace them.

The faculty survey revealed that faculty desire more flexibility in delivering LfA courses and more guidance about LfA options. LfA gives faculty flexibility in determining how to design multi-component courses to provide substantive in-person components. The LfA model does not require that all components of a course be delivered live, but it does require that each course have at least one substantial in-person component and that students who wish to attend in person, or have to attend in person to meet their pedagogic needs, can do so. Faculty have flexibility in thinking about how a class unfolds over the course of the semester, respecting our obligation to offer students an in-class educational experience.

Additional, detailed suggestions about how to creatively implement an LfA course can be found on the [Provost's Office website](#). We also encourage you to consult with the Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) or your school/college associate deans to explore all possible options. For additional ideas and suggestions, please visit the [CTL website](#) and Pedagogical Partnerships Blackboard site, which you can reach through the [Digital Learning & Innovation website](#).

### **New Cohorting App**

Last week, University Registrar Chris Paal announced to Charles River Campus faculty the launch of a new app – [InClassLfA](#) – that students can use to reserve seats in classes they wish to attend in person. This app is already being used on the Medical Campus and will allow both students and faculty to manage in-person class attendance. We expect to also be able to use the app to allow students to reserve seats in teaching fellow-led discussion sections. We are working on this functionality and will provide an update early in the new year. We hope that the app will empower students to feel more comfortable attending class in-person, and will allow you to more easily anticipate and manage in-person attendance without the need for creating and managing rotations on your own. All spring 2021 classes will be entered into the app initially, and faculty who wish to manage class attendance themselves may remove a single course or multiple courses by going into the app.

### **Additional Investment in Faculty Support**

The faculty survey revealed that two of the most effective support systems in the fall semester were the Faculty Coaches and the Classroom Moderators. Based on this positive feedback, we have extended the Faculty Coaches program through the end of the spring 2021 semester. We have also expanded the Classroom Moderators program so that all spring classes are eligible to receive a Classroom Moderator.

## **Audit of Classroom Technology**

Finally, we understand that some classrooms continue to have significant audio/visual challenges that are impacting the teaching and learning experience. Between now and the start of spring classes, we will work to identify the classrooms with the most significant A/V issues and, where possible, will implement solutions to improve the classroom experience.

While I know that these adjustments will not address all of the challenges associated with LfA, I hope that they will improve the teaching and learning experience for the spring 2021 semester. Once again, thank you for all you have done over the past year and for your continued understanding as we navigate this challenging time. Best wishes for a restful holiday break and happy New Year.

Cc: Council of Deans  
Provost's Cabinet