



September 9, 2022

Dear UAA Faculty,

I want to once again acknowledge that tremendous effort has gone into the shift to online teaching and learning during these last two years. Even so, both students and faculty have reported that achieving authentic, meaningful connection has been a challenge. UAA is not alone in this practice, it is something that is addressed in [regulation](#) by the federal Department of Education.

Practical Training Courses: In my August 15 message to you, I included information about new VA requirements for Practical Training Courses such as internships, practica, field study, and clinicals. In order for students to use VA benefits for these courses, there must be weekly communication between the instructor and the student. This communication can be by way of a meeting, but it can also be asynchronous, as long as it is initiated by the instructor and invites some form of two-way communication between the instructor and student.

Online Courses: For online courses, this expectation for meaningful faculty-to-student communication and engagement is *expanded*. The U.S. Department of Education requires that all distance learning offerings at colleges and universities that receive federal funds. Please see [CFR 34 602.2 Definitions - Distance Education](#).

UAA faculty take teaching and learning seriously. That is one of the reasons I was so excited to be chosen as your provost. However, while I am confident that UAA faculty individually engage in regular and substantive interaction, UAA does not have a common definition for this important expectation. In consultation with the Faculty Senate Executive Board and the appropriate Faculty Senate committees, I will be working with faculty to develop a formal policy this academic year. For now, please use the below guidance for all asynchronous or hybrid courses:

Regular and Substantive Interaction (RSI) is:

1) Initiated by the instructor;

This differentiates distance education courses from correspondence courses, where students are responsible for initiating contact.

Examples include but are not limited to: individualized emails, instructor-led or -facilitated discussions, scheduled, and required virtual appointments, personalized feedback on assignments.

