

A Message from Dr. Ekblad – Director of Distance Education ORU College of Theology & Ministry

Greetings ORU Distance Education Students,

I just wanted to take a moment to make you aware of some exciting and beneficial changes beginning with the Fall 2022 semester. We are committed to helping you move forward toward degree completion amidst the current economic and public health safety challenges we continue to face. Thank you for the part you have played in the continued growth of the Distance Education Program during this unprecedented time in history.

Recently the College of Theology and Ministry faculty voted unanimously to adopt new measures for the Distance Education Program that will benefit you both financially and scholastically. I want to make you aware of our current plan of action beginning with the Fall 2022 semester. We are committed to offering all of the fully online and blended courses previously scheduled with two slight modifications. First, instead of coming to campus in the middle of each semester for the face to face (Synchronous Learning) component of your blended A and B courses, they will take place virtually through Zoom. Second, all live lectures for blended courses will shift from taking place in a two- and one-half day intensive to seven weekly two and one-half hour Zoom sessions on Tuesday or Thursday for the seven corresponding weeks of asynchronous learning in D2L. Please ensure your Zoom availability prior to the beginning of the semester and begin to become familiar with the Zoom conference call platform now. You will be required to remotely attend all scheduled class room hours from 6-8:30 PM (CST) on the day your class is scheduled. The standard overall grade reduction of 2.5 % for each hour of class will remain and be enforced.

This means that students taking blended courses during the fall 2022 semester and forward will be able to complete these courses without physically coming to campus. It also means that students will have the option to accelerate their program completion by adding an additional Blended A or B course to their schedule if they meet on the alternate evenings of each week. Fully online (asynchronous) courses will continue to remain the same and encompass the entire semester.

We are giving you this notice now so that any previously made travel plans for the fall semester can be changed and the need to plan for future travel plans to Tulsa to attend class can be eliminated. We will miss not seeing you on campus each semester to experience the ORU ethos and interact with one another. We do, however, feel that the time has come to release you from the added cost of travel and the need to use vacation time to attend class. Please be assured that you are valued as a vital part of our ORU community and that these changes comply with current ATS accreditation standards. We are confident in our ability to make this shift based on the five semesters our faculty and students performed flawlessly when we had to pivot to Zoom learning during the initial surge of the pandemic.

I encourage each of you to enroll in Blended A and B courses for the Summer 2022 so that you can attend the final on-campus intensive in June. I will be making an appearance in each class to see you in person and further clarify this new direction.

Sincerest Blessings,

Dr. Ekblad

Attention: If you are an international student with an F1 visa taking classes from the USA, remember that it's your responsibility to maintain your legal status in the country. In this case, it means that you are required to attend in-person classes at ORU every five months. In other words, you would be out of status with immigration if you go longer than five months without physically coming to ORU to attend a class. Please keep that in mind as you plan for the next semesters and plan accordingly. (ORU International Office).