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The Western Insider

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## The Western Insider

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April 1, 2020



## Faculty stepping up to support transition to distance education

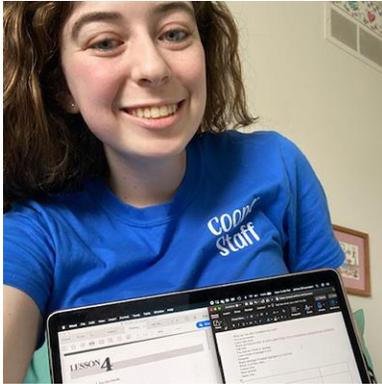
“It really took a mental adjustment for me, because I’m a people person,” says Lucinda Stinson, a College of Health and Human Services instructor. “I’m not overly computer savvy, but I know that I can figure it out.” Faculty are working their way through distance education, as well as easing student concerns about the changes. WMUx is also creating a growing number of resources to use for the virtual classroom.

[Finding their way](#)



*It is with heavy hearts that we recognize the recent passing of chemical engineering student Bassey Offiong. Bassey was a young man of enormous potential who was scheduled to graduate in just a few weeks. The entire Bronco family grieves this tragic loss of life. On behalf of our community, I have extended my condolences to Bassey's family. Please keep them in your thoughts during this difficult time.*

*—President Edward Montgomery*



[Grad student uses creativity, collaboration to keep her students learning](#)



[Units across WMU donate personal protection equipment to medical professionals](#)



[WMU researchers study food consumption behavior during COVID-19 pandemic](#)

## Safeguarding our future in a period of uncertainty

In a recent letter to campus, President Montgomery spoke to the uncertainty and changes COVID-19 has brought to the community. Faculty and staff have felt the impacts both professionally and personally. There are understandable concerns about the duration of the health crisis and its multi-faceted effects, but leadership continues to consider and take actions to help mitigate widespread impacts. Learn more about how WMU is [moving forward](#).

For the latest on WMU's COVID-19 response, visit [wmich.edu/covid-19](http://wmich.edu/covid-19).



### An opportunity for empathy

Dr. Scott Cowley, assistant professor of marketing, reveals the increased flexibility, simplicity and communication needed to approach distance learning. He's using virtual classroom tools to better learn about his students and create a more fulfilling educational experience. [Embrace a more flexible approach](#)



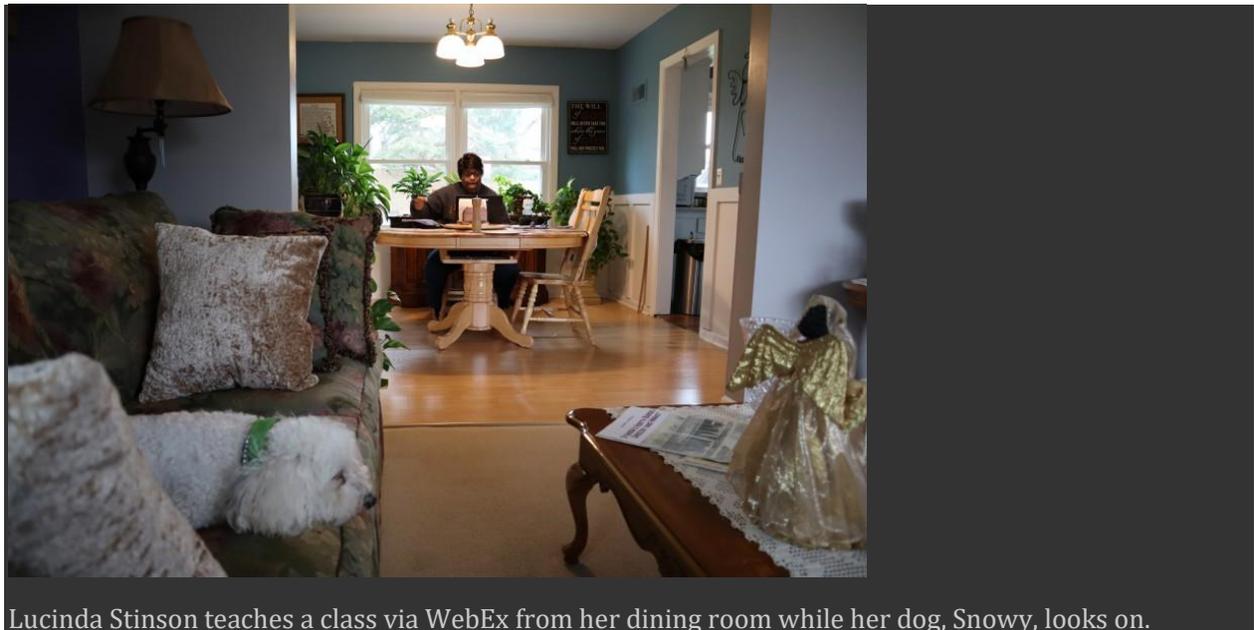
## On distance education, resiliency and coming out stronger: Q and A with Dr. Jim Eckert

No stranger to incorporating video content into his courses, Robert S. Kaiser Professor of Sales Jim Eckert shares what students and faculty can gain from the shift to distance education. His message: “We will be stronger!” [Gain from the change](#)

## Faculty stepping up to support transition to distance education

Contact: [Erin Flynn](#)

March 17, 2020



Lucinda Stinson teaches a class via WebEx from her dining room while her dog, Snowy, looks on.

Follow the University's [COVID-19 response webpage](#) for the latest updates.

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Distance education has begun for all Western Michigan University students. The transition to online forms of learning is an effort to flatten the curve and mitigate risk associated with the global COVID-19 pandemic, and it's new territory for many students and faculty.

For **Lucinda Stinson**, a part-time instructor in the College of Health and Human Services, it means that her dining room has transformed into her classroom. The change seemed daunting at first.

"There was a wide range of emotions, running from fear to confidence that I can do this," says Stinson, who spent the weekend learning and preparing. "It really took a mental adjustment for me, because I'm a people person. I'm not overly computer savvy, but I know that I can figure it out."



Stinson reads from slides in her presentation.

Stinson took advantage of the help available through the [faculty technology center](#) to learn about using WebEx. She says the staff there walked her through the steps and she was able to pick things up quickly. Plus, she had her daughter on standby if there was something she didn't understand.

"She's a millennial," laughs Stinson, admitting that sometimes learning new technology can be a challenge. But she points out, she does have an advantage. "As a health care professional—I've been doing this for over 40 years—you always have to think on your feet. So, I can always go from Plan A to Plan B to Plan C very quickly."

Her flexibility and commitment to taking on this new challenge is something **Dr. Edwin Martini**, associate provost of WMUx, has seen from faculty members across campus.

"At the end of the day, we're all in this together. Students are learning new tools, as well," he says. "Our staff have been working long hours, into the night and throughout the weekend, to make sure that we can support our instructors and our students during this challenging time."

Students are supporting instructors, as well.

"My students have been absolutely wonderful," says Stinson. "They know that this is going to be a little tricky, but you know what, we're doing this all together."

Some classes are easier to shift to an online learning platform than others.

"Our faculty have been amazing," Martini says. "From the moment we announced the shift to distance instruction, they have organized, attended, and led workshops, shared ideas from their colleagues around the world, and are doing whatever is needed to shift their delivery methods to meet the needs of our students."



**Dr. Jeffrey Angles**, a professor of Japanese who heads up WMU's Japanese language department, says language classes are particularly difficult to transition online because of the need for rapid back-and-forth interaction. But, he says, he's been working with instructors in his department to adapt to and overcome those challenges.

"Over the last few days I've been trying to help part-time instructors reconceive of how to teach their classes," says Angles. "I'm trying to help them understand what we can do well on an online learning environment and help them focus a little bit more on those things."

Ultimately, says Angles, this is a "new adventure" for everyone involved.

"It is all hard work, and there will be bumps in the road along the way," agrees Martini. "But, if we continue to work together, we will get through this."

"I think that collaboration, that unity, that common denominator is really going to propel us," Stinson says. "As long as we keep it fun and let the students have a good experience, we're all going to be okay."

## **Grad student uses creativity, collaboration to keep her students learning**

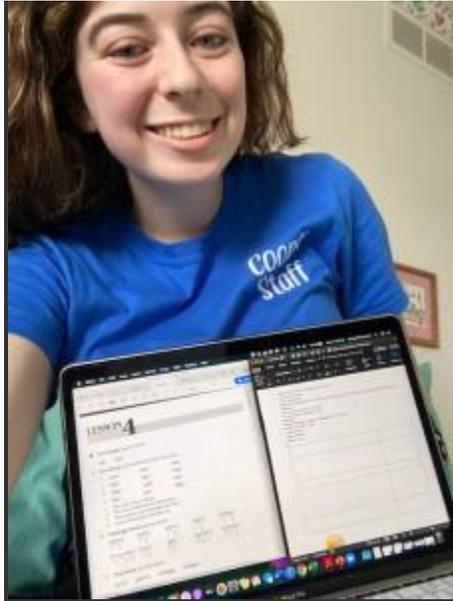
Contact: [Caryn Davidson](#)

March 23, 2020

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—The closing of school buildings to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus presents a unique challenge to keep students learning. Through creativity and collaboration with families, special education teacher and master's student in the

Interdisciplinary Preparation in Autism—IPA—program, **Jenna Silverstein**, has been able to do just that.

She continues to deliver the exact same reading interventions she would normally provide in person to her elementary students, it just looks a little different.



Jenna Silverstein

"I think some people would assume that evidence-based instruction might go out the window when quickly moving to online instruction, but she continues to implement best practices just like she does in the classroom. It's impressive," says **Dr. Kate LaLonde**, Silverstein's instructor and mentor in the IPA program. "I was able to observe a session virtually and was so impressed and inspired by her creativity and that she continues to work on IEP goals during this challenging time."

Through the use of online tools, Silverstein is able to share her screen with students one-on-one to show the lesson she would normally show in person in a small group. She uses a mouse instead of her finger to guide students through the lesson and utilizes the same token board she uses in class to keep her students motivated. Because her students are used to the systems and routines they established in the classroom, it has been easy to move them to a virtual format.

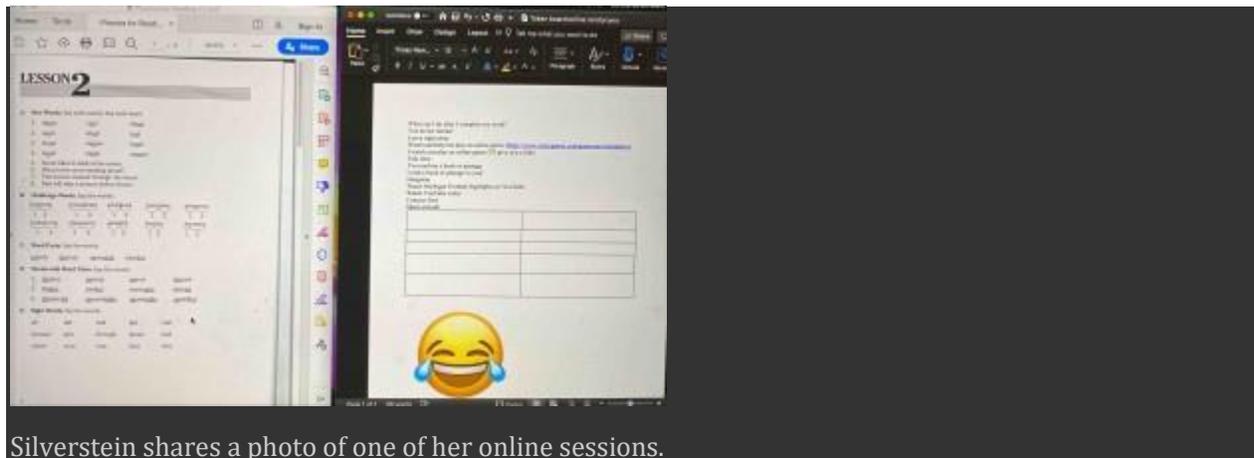
"The best thing has been to be able to still support my students from afar and see they are still learning and making progress, even if we aren't able to be together in person," Silverstein says. "I also get to see them in their home and they get to show me all the cool and amazing things they are doing. This is a tough time, so being able to have my students continue to learn through all the chaos has been the best!"

She is teaching math by giving "number talks," a teaching strategy allowing a teacher to share their thinking as they explore all the possible methods to solve a math problem, and by assigning individualized online math games for students to work on skills at their level.

Silverstein says the shift to virtual instruction wouldn't have been possible without strong collaboration with families.

"I've been in constant communication with parents about getting materials printed for students and helping with technology issues. My parents have been amazing!" says Silverstein. "Now, more than ever, it takes a village to keep our students learning. Although our villages may be physically fragmented, technology can help us maintain our connections and continue to make progress."

Here are some tips Silverstein shares to help other educators continue to provide high-quality instruction in the online environment:



Silverstein shares a photo of one of her online sessions.

1. **Make a plan for how you want your instruction online to look and modify it for the online environment.** "I work in small groups in my classroom but knew if I wanted to be effective online it would be best to work one-on-one. I also knew I needed to see students at least twice a week for 30 minutes at a time to maintain each students' current level. My goal is to move them forward so I'm meeting with them more frequently."
2. **Keep your instruction short.** "If you are talking at students for more than a minute and a half, I'd say the instruction may not be effective. You need to keep students engaged by encouraging active student (responses). The more opportunities for students to respond, the more the student will learn."
3. **Be patient with yourself and with your families.** "This is new for everyone. Technology doesn't always work. If a student misses time with you, it's okay. Be understanding and appreciative that you're able to work with them in an online setting."

Silverstein teaches special education in Plainwell Community Schools and plans to graduate from the IPA program in June. She gives a great deal of credit to **Drs. Kate LaLonde, Kristal Ehrhardt** and **Sonia Lewis** for supporting her throughout the second year of the IPA program.

"These three women have been there for me all year," Silverstein says. "I reach out to them all the time with different questions, and I've learned a lot about behavior, which has helped me tremendously in my teaching!"

## Units across WMU donate personal protection equipment to medical professionals

Contact: [Erin Flynn](#)

March 25, 2020



Jill Weber and Jessica Slates display some of the donated items.

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—The Western Michigan University community is banding together to provide health care providers with essential equipment. Across the nation, hospitals and medical offices are dealing with shortages of supplies necessary to keep themselves and patients safe as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Our faculty and students at WMU are caring problem solvers, and started the effort to collect personal protective gear and disinfectant chemicals from our labs to help protect those on the front line of fighting COVID-19," says **Dr. Terri Goss Kinzy**, vice president for research and innovation. "The Sindecuse team stepped right up to serve as the collection point."

Various colleges and units on the WMU campus are collecting personal protection equipment, such as gloves, masks, disposable gowns, face shields, respirators and ethanol or isopropyl alcohol for [Sindecuse Health Center](#).

"These supplies are important to help protect the health care providers as well as to help prevent the spread of disease," says **Jessica Slates**, director of nursing at Sindecuse.



Spitsbergen's vehicle packed with supplies.



Some of the supplies collected by the Department of Biological Sciences.

The donated equipment will be used at the clinic to treat students, faculty and staff. In the event there are excess supplies, Slates says, Sindecuse would be happy to partner with facilities in the local community.

**Dr. John Spitsbergen**, chair of the Department of Biological Sciences, made a delivery Monday morning after putting out a call to his department. They collected so much that he packed his Subaru Outback to the ceiling. He says in a time of such uncertainty, donating supplies offers a sense of purpose.

"We really feel a bit helpless, and this is one way we can give," he says. "Everyone in my department and at WMU is being really wonderful. I constantly see folks stepping up to provide information to others, to help students and to donate scarce supplies."

Spitsbergen and his team also offered to help with sterilization, if needed.

"Everyone I talk to feels like we are living through some sort of science fiction movie. Unfortunately, with this movie you can't just change the channel, and each time you tune in, it just gets more frightening," says Spitsbergen. "We all want to do whatever we can to help."

The support isn't going unnoticed.

"Seeing the University community come together during this critical time is amazing," Slates says, thanking all of the departments who have been able to donate extra supplies. "Staff feel supported, relieved and very grateful that they can continue to perform their essential job duties while protecting themselves, as well as the greater community."

Faculty and staff from the Frostic School of Art have also been digging through their studios to find masks, disposable gloves, disinfectant wipes and safety glasses all to donate to Bronson Hospital.

After the state's stay-at-home order is lifted, those interested in donating equipment should reach out to [Slates](#) or [Stacy Emery](#), coordinator of clinical support services, to arrange a drop-off time. Sindecuse is in need of gowns, gloves, hand sanitizer, masks, face shields and Lysol.

"I think the next couple of weeks are really going to test our community," says Spitsbergen. "So, I would encourage everyone to be kind, understanding and patient, and to do

## WMU researchers study food consumption behavior during COVID-19 pandemic

Contact: [Stacey Markin](#)

March 19, 2020



Dr. Ann Veeck



Dr. Hu Xie

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Two Western Michigan University marketing researchers are at the forefront of understanding how a pandemic like the novel coronavirus affects food consumption behavior, with the hope that their findings can help communities and companies in emergency management efforts.

[Dr. Ann Veeck](#), professor and acting chair in the Department of Marketing, and [Dr. Hu Xie](#), assistant professor of marketing, conducted a survey in China from Feb. 15 to Feb. 23, as the COVID-19 virus was rapidly spreading in several regions. With government guidance that people should leave their homes as little as possible, Veeck and Xie, who was the lead researcher on the project, examined food shopping, preparation and consumption behavior, and the coping mechanisms people use during a widespread, deadly epidemic.

With the help of Chinese colleagues and support from the Haworth College of Business Food Industry Research and Education Center, the researchers conducted an online household survey, which included questions related to coping strategies, emotions, knowledge of the coronavirus, health management, demographics and food-related activities. Questions were both closed-ended—rating scales and multiple choice—and open-ended. To allow geographical comparisons, responses were gathered from throughout China, with four areas deliberately oversampled: Beijing, and Jilin, Fujian, and Hubei Provinces. Ultimately, over 1,000 households completed the survey, including more than 150 from Hubei Province, site of the initial outbreak of COVID-19.

While results are being tabulated with advanced analysis yet to come, Veeck and Xie have preliminary findings that have immediate relevance.

## INITIAL FINDINGS

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- People increased online ordering and delivery of food, with some respondents reporting that they ordered food online for the first time, citing the importance of avoiding human contact as much as possible.
- Preferred sources for online delivery of food included a combination of local, national and international providers. Some respondents reported that the largest online retailers, such as TMall.com and JD.com, had shortages of important products. Some local entrepreneurs filled gaps, often using China's popular social media tool, WeChat, to communicate the availability of products. A 44-year-old man from Fujian Province commented, "Before, we mainly bought vegetables and fruits at the market in person. Since the epidemic, we have been buying them through local online businesses."
- People who continued leaving their homes to buy food and other household products often increased time between trips and bought large orders of food at one time. A 39-year-old woman from Beijing commented, "Basically, I just drive directly to a large supermarket to buy food and then go home quickly. I won't stay too long ..."
- 58.6% of households reported stocking up on food and beverages. Frequently noted choices were rice, flour, instant noodles, frozen dumplings and bottled water.
- Many people reported increasing the perceived healthiness of their diet to increase immunity. A 33-year-old woman from Hubei Province said, "We're eating healthier food with fewer snacks because we want to stay healthy. Plus, snacks are difficult to buy." Interestingly, people who perceived that they had control over their health were more likely to claim to be increasing their consumption of healthy foods, while

people who felt health is largely due to luck were more likely to report increasing the consumption of junk food, snacks and alcohol.

## IMPLICATIONS

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Citizens wear masks at food market on February 24, 2020 in Beijing, China. (Photo by Lintao Zhang/Getty Images)

Veeck and Xie's findings provide important takeaways for manufacturers and retailers during an epidemic.

- The types of goods that are in demand are largely predictable--pasta, canned and frozen foods, cleaning products and paper goods. Manufacturers should have plans in place to increase production and supply of these goods in emergencies.
- Retailers should rearrange their stores to allow people to quickly select the goods that are most in demand and then pay and leave quickly to decrease human contact.
- Retailers, both local and international, should be prepared to create and communicate the availability of flexible delivery systems that can accommodate dynamic local situations. The WMU study found that in many cases smaller, local entrepreneurs have been best able to accommodate household needs in China.

Veeck and Xie will be following up on their findings in future investigations, addressing key questions such as:

- How enduring are the market alternatives for ordering and delivering food that emerge during an emergency?
- Are consumers' food provisioning and consumption preferences permanently changed?
- Does the food hoarding that emerges in an emergency continue when normalcy returns?
- What types of food consumption behavior increase individuals' sense of control in an epidemic?

- How does food consumption behavior impact or interact with attitudes such as hopefulness, fear and despair?

“With widespread epidemics like this one, and others, there are severe health, economic and social consequences, so this research is highly applicable,” says Veeck. “Many experts believe that similar pandemics are inevitable in the future. Long-term, the results from the study have the potential to assist public policy officials and health authorities, as well as manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers in anticipating how consumers will react in epidemics, allowing improved preparation for subsequent events.”

For many, food is not only necessary for survival but also a source of comfort. Xie looks forward to exploring that dimension in future research. “This study may shed light on the psychological motivations for food consumption during an epidemic and what coping strategies best allow consumers to adapt to new conditions in a crisis. As the other countries face similar situations with COVID-19 spread, we hope our ongoing research will aid decision makers in understanding and addressing critical needs.”

## Distance education as an opportunity for empathy

Contact: [Stacey Markin](#)

March 25, 2020

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—In early 2009, at the height of the last financial crisis, **Dr. Scott Cowley**, assistant professor of marketing, lost his first job out of college. “It was a very scary and difficult time for me,” he says. Living and learning through that experience helped Cowley develop empathy for people dealing with similar life turbulence, and it is guiding him in relating to his students in meaningful ways during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“On day one, when we got the news we were moving to distance learning, I decided that my approach was going to be increased flexibility, simplicity and communication, and that’s what I’ve been trying to do,” he says.



Dr. Scott Cowley works from home.

How has Cowley embraced a more flexible approach?

He eliminated less critical components of his courses and projects and created wider time windows for completing quizzes and exams while allowing students to use their notes. He has also been holding virtual office hours and creating non-lecture videos to talk to students and keep everybody on the same page. He has invested in a professional microphone and webcam to give his students the best experience.

“I’ve been using a program called Loom that I’ve introduced to other professors in the Department of Marketing, many of whom have also shifted to using it for video recordings. It has some fun features such as letting students use emoji to react while they’re watching videos, and a comment box that I’m prepopulating with some light discussion questions so that we can have some interaction. I’ve been texting, livestreaming, emailing, and talking to my students on social media.”

Maintaining the sense of connection and fun they enjoyed in the physical classroom is especially important to Cowley. One simple thing he created is a [Spotify playlist](#) where he and his students could share and enjoy songs that loosely related to working from home and social distancing. “What I love is that some students who have been adding songs are those who may not have spoken much in class.”

Cowley’s students and fellow faculty members acknowledge his approach is working.

“Dr. Cowley has been checking in with our class regularly through email, text messaging and WebEx,” says **Lindsay Rogers**, a student in Cowley’s Digital and Social Media Marketing course. “I feel more like myself again because of his positivity and engagement.”

And several faculty have lauded his approach both with teaching technology and his care and concern for his students, including many faculty members who have been teaching in distance learning formats for years.

Though this is an uncertain time, Cowley hopes his own story can serve as a relevant touchstone. “The last major financial crisis was the surprising catalyst that led me into the digital marketing field, which paved the way for a very happy future. I know that many of my students are concerned about their futures, so I want to make sure I avoid contributing to any anxiety and provide a calm, but strategic perspective that many of them are going to need. Our digital marketing students know how important it is to adapt to a fast-changing industry, so hopefully our experiences together will make them that much more resilient and capable of navigating their way forward while maintaining optimism.”

## Distance education, resiliency and coming out stronger: Q and A with Dr. Jim Eckert

Contact: [Stacey Markin](#)

March 23, 2020



KALAMAZOO, Mich.—**Dr. Jim Eckert**, Robert S. Kaiser Professor of Sales, has long incorporated video content into his courses. He shared with us how he is shifting his courses to a distance learning model and what students and faculty can gain from the experience.

### **What sorts of content do you normally deliver via video or other distance learning formats in your courses?**

I record lectures to share the needed content, and I also record coaching and feedback videos to help students know what they need to do and what they could improve on for the future. Lastly, I record example videos for the various role-play and presentation assignments they are required to do.

### **What do students like best about your video content and other content that they can access remotely?**

Videos are the students' most commonly consumed media, so they tend to like them. In addition, they have access to a pause and rewind feature that isn't available when I teach live!

The ability to work at their own pace and to review material multiple times is helpful to the learning process.

**How are you now adjusting your sales courses, which often rely on in-person instruction in the sales lab or other contexts?**

We have moved what would be our face-to-face interactions to WebEx meetings. We are unique in that this format can benefit students, as virtual meetings are a common interaction approach in today's selling world. It is likely that I will keep some of my future role-plays in the WebEx environment even after this crisis.

We are using collaboration software like Microsoft Teams and WebEx to have ongoing conversations with the students. Nothing will replace the community that has formed via the physical Robert S. Kaiser Sales, Negotiation and Leadership Lab, but we are doing our best to keep the high-touch, coaching-focused approach we normally deliver face-to-face in the lab.

**What do you think students will get out of this challenging experience?**

I believe they will gain some additional skills in technology and working virtually. They will gain resiliency and toughness. These are important things for everyone. I also hope this experience helps them understand that being adaptive and kind creates more success in the long-run.

**What is your advice for faculty members who do not regularly record course content or provide distance learning options?**

Keep it simple. Streamline your course and assignments to the absolute keys and then create the communication flow and resource availability to allow your students to succeed. Recording a video lecture is a funny thing—you miss the back and forth that occurs with a live audience, so act like that audience is there. Still use your examples, still be highly animated and have some fun with it. Don't worry about being perfect. Ask yourself when you are done if the video will be a good learning resource for the students. If the answer is yes, publish it!

**What do you think that WMU, as an institution, will learn through the process of delivering all courses and some services at a distance?**

I think we will see that we have fantastic, adaptable and caring faculty and staff and that our students really do care about their education and want to learn. We will be stronger!