

Hello All,

Happy New Year and Happy New Semester! I am approaching this week's Friday Feature with the dual purpose of looking forward to the semester before us and also repeating several key points from my December 18 communication, knowing that repetition is a key prompt for our brains to retain vital information. Our brains were tired in December! I hope you had some time to rest and recuperate over the break and stand ready to implement what you learned in the fall as you consider ways to continue facilitating student learning as well as your own learning in the ever broadening realms of digital pedagogy and instructional technology.

Provost Office Hour: If you ever have questions about matters we are working on in Academic Affairs, please remember that I have a standing [Provost Virtual Office Hour on Fridays from 9:30 to 10:30](#). Please join me on Zoom if you ever have questions or feedback for me.

Virtual commencement was a great success!

Kudos are in order – for our determined graduates and our commencement planning team. The day was beautiful, and the planning was flawless. Several hundred students – some with families, some alone, some dressed to the hilt, some dressed for comfort – braved the chill morning to pick up diplomas, receive a memento, and mark the day with a photo op in our socially distanced West Center gymnasium set-up. I include a few requisite snapshots of my own and extend my gratitude to Tim Drueke and the faculty marshals; staff from Graduate Studies, Records and Registration, Events Management, Facilities, University Communications and Marketing, and University Police; and the whole Commencement Committee team. The considerable effort created a safe and meaningful event in the face of significant constraints.



Spring reminders, updates, and schedule adjustments:

- Please communicate frequently with your students about the remote week expectations and any transition pointers for those of you moving from remote to hybrid or in-person on the 19th. Students may add the class after initial communications. As I said in December, err on the side of redundant communications, whatever your favored mode is. Send your expectations this week, during the remote week (to capture late adds), and as we transition to in-person instruction. Access to class materials on the first day is a key factor in student success, but in this environment, clear understandings of modality are just as crucial.
- Grading for spring 2021 will return to our regular system, removing the lengthened timeframes for S/U election and the CR and UN grade options.
- COVID-19 testing requirement: all residential and commuter students registered for hybrid and in-person classes will be required to demonstrate compliance with our COVID-19 testing requirement. Faculty will be provided lists of pertinent students who are not compliant with the testing requirement

and who should therefore not attend in-person classes until they are compliant. Students have been instructed to contact faculty if they are not able to report to in-person or hybrid classes due to non-compliance. Remember, some of these students may have gotten a test, but their results may have been delayed. Please don't assume negligence. Work with students to ascertain the most appropriate interpretation of impact on your attendance policy. We are still working on details, but we are likely to share this list twice at the beginning of the semester, after initial compliance review (on or around January 18) and after an additional window of time allowing for students to address the compliance issue. Please send questions to Tim Drueke: drueket@winthrop.edu.

- Move-in has begun for a very small number of students. Most will move in next week, during remote learning. They have been asked to schedule move-in times accordingly, but if there are delays in getting their test results in, or positive test results requiring quarantine, you will need to work with these subsets of students to ensure they keep pace with their peers who don't encounter these obstacles. For students who test positive, now or at any time later in the semester, fall protocols will remain in place. Notifications of student absence will be sent via the Maxient system.
- Spring schedule and wellness days:
 - **The remote start** has built in a reasonable period of time after the holiday season and before in-person instruction begins to minimize on-campus outbreaks resulting from holiday activities that are beyond our control.
 - **Replacing spring break with five spring wellness days:** We heard from faculty and from students that having no fall break was hard. While individual days are not the same as a whole week off, we can still approach these days as "time off." I encourage all faculty to think of ways to position those days in your syllabi as transition points and not to assign work on those dates.
 - **Faculty furlough dates:** Faculty who planned to use Spring Break for furlough may need to use wellness days for furlough or, as they often do during spring break, for catching up and regrouping for the next phase of learning in their courses. Thus, we should not rush to fill student wellness days with meetings requiring faculty to attend, if possible.
 - All instructional protections will remain in place in spring 2021, including expectations for masking, social distancing, and reduced room occupancy. Our schedule for spring is roughly 30% online/70 % hybrid and face-to-face sections.

Volunteers for an ad-hoc academic / IT working group:

I am working with CFO Justin Oates to put together a cross-divisional team to assess next steps on the following efforts:

- Exploring benefits of a laptop requirement for Winthrop students
- Shifting from our current computer lab model to a bring-your-own-device model with cloud-based software for student computing needs
- Building printing stations at key transit points to support student printing needs
- Identifying faculty and staff technology needs to support instruction

If you are interested in serving on this group, please let me know! It will start working in the spring semester with an aggressive timeline on determining steps needed to implement the first bullet.

First FCUP meeting of semester:

President Hynd and I had a great first meeting with FCUP this week. The items we discussed included the following:

- Updated COVID response: discussed items in most recent email from President Hynd; noted that while we are pre-approved to be a vaccine distribution site, we have not been selected or identified as one at this point in time. There are many logistics that would have to be settled for us to implement a drive-through vaccination program at Winthrop. Stay tuned.
- Growing pay gap between administration and faculty: we are using market medians to inform any new hires and remain committed to closing existing salary gaps to market medians when budget restructuring allows.
- Budget updates: we continue to work on adjustments to bring us through FY21 with a balanced budget or as small of a deficit as possible, to minimize impact on net position. There are currently no plans to implement a RIF program or declare financial exigency. We are exploring additional resources that may come to Winthrop through the most recent federal stimulus bill as well and whether to pursue other levers such as a voluntary separation program. Stay tuned.
- Dean/Chair reviews: Chairs are reviewed annually by deans, and deans are reviewed annually by the Provost. A three-year rotation of dean review by functional collaborators and faculty will commence in Spring 2021. A new Academic Administrator Evaluation Policy is currently under review by Senior Leadership to establish this rotation.
- Response to HR training requirement and work request concerns: the campus is committed to annual OSHA-related trainings. In future, faculty and staff will have more advance notice. The end of the calendar year remains the optimal timeframe, since most slip, trip, fall incidents occur in January and February across workplaces. Questions came up about safety concerns related to delays in response to work requests submitted to Facilities Management. Tally Peake filled the vacant position created by Chris Rousseau's retirement. He started January 4. Finalists are being selected in the reposted AVP for Facilities Management, and interviews will be scheduled soon.
- Technology resources to conduct classes: budget development will take into consideration the need for additional investments in technology infrastructure. The Ad-Hoc academic/IT working group will start to lay out priorities in this area.
- Telecommuting/remote employment policy as we move to Phase 3: We have approved a clear process for requesting telecommuting/remote employment when we move to Phase 3. Our current plan is to remain in Phase 2 through March 2021.
- Summer school pay changes: We continue to explore a revenue share model as part of our FY22 budget development process, so we are holding on any changes for summer 2021. The only change for this summer was elimination of the 9% salary bump for B session courses and some inconsistent practices across the colleges that do not align with current policy. Additional conversations on changes to compensation will come through deans and chairs for conversation in faculty assemblies.
- Setting up emergency fund for Winthrop employees in financial distress: Members of FCUP asked about setting up an employee emergency fund. President Hynd advised them to discuss this with Evan Bohnen and RJ Gimbl in Advancement. This would be equivalent to our student emergency fund but would help employees who may need assistance as a result of the furlough program or other COVID-related impacts.

Academic Leadership work plan for spring 2021:

Academic Affairs leaders continue to work on COVID-related planning. We are very proud of the hard work that paid off in fall 2020 with a fairly smooth semester of remote, online, hybrid, and in-person instruction. We are excited that we were able to launch our chatbot in December to push information to students and gather data from their responses. The chatbot identity is Big Stuff, our mascot. Led by the efforts of Vice Provost for Student Success Jamie Cooper, our entire retention enterprise will work together to use the data we collect to keep students enrolled and connect them to the information they need to succeed.

Coming for spring:

- Our QEP will focus on career readiness with special emphasis on experiential learning. Invitations to serve on the Topic Development Committee will be coming out next week. Kudos to the good work of the Topic Selection Committee. Career readiness is the right topic at the right time and will give us momentum in an area that many of you identified as key to student success and strengthened cross-divisional collaboration.
- We continue to build cross-divisional plans to increase student success and retention as well.
- We continue the important work of policy revision, policy development, and preparation for our decennial SACSCOC Reaffirmation.
- Academic Master Planning will focus on firming up our college-level health metrics, identifying strengthened transfer pathways, and new program development opportunities. With the proposal of the cybersecurity degree, we have completed work on new program development that was identified in the first phase of the Winthrop Plan. We now need to make strategic decisions on new program opportunities to keep our offerings responsive to the demands of our students, workforce, and democracy.

It has been quite a week on the national scale. As Americans, we will all have front-row seats to how the leadership transitions at the White House and in Congress approach new solutions to managing our health crisis and the resulting economic and social challenges that extend to every corner of our and our students' lives.

My new year wish for us all (at Winthrop and more broadly) is that we bring a renewed spirit of teamwork to the problems we must all tackle together. While social distancing keeps us physically isolated from each other, we have never been in greater need of collective solutions. Now that's a grand challenge worth tackling.

Have a great semester,

Adrienne