

Hello All,

Greetings at term's end. We made it. I know it has been bumpy, stressful, exhausting, and just plain hard. I don't see any corner of the campus that has been isolated from the impacts of needing to place additional care and attention on so many actions we once took for granted. The coronavirus pandemic, the heightened national conversations around racial justice, and this year's reminders that democracy itself requires vigilant upkeep – not to mention relearning how to do our jobs with so many new requirements – has taken us all to the limits of our abilities. I trust that we will emerge from these tests stronger, more agile, and with renewed commitments to our shared purpose: educating and preparing students. Our current students and graduates build on the foundation of care and attention we model as they prepare for and embark upon their future paths. I have no doubt that public health, equity work, and engaged citizenship will feature largely in those paths and demand the talent they bring with them every day, from Winthrop into the world.

Virtual Commencement!

Many of you will have already found your own ways to provide that special faculty recognition of your students' accomplishments, via departmental and individual celebrations, commendations, and virtual high-fives. I hope you can take a moment to see how more than 500 students shared pictures and comments for our curated commencement celebration that will post to the Winthrop homepage tomorrow at 3 p.m. For the hardy, some of us will be outside of the West Center tomorrow morning to wave at and recognize the graduates as they come through our socially distanced diploma pick-up from 9 to noon. Look for them on the Johnson lot side. All other doors will be secured to make sure we maintain a safe environment for all.

Spring schedule adjustments:

I want to use this space to reiterate that the decisions made by Senior Leadership to modify the spring 2021 schedule were based upon data from the survey of faculty and staff – which had a robust response rate – as well as smaller conversations with student groups, leadership across the institution, and with inputs from the Board of Trustees.

A few points for faculty to keep in mind:

- The Bookstore will provide shipping options for textbooks. If you have assignments in the first week from a text that is only available in hard copy and/or in our bookstore, please communicate with your students your first-week reading expectations early and often: send your expectations before the remote week commences, during the remote week (to capture late adds), and as we transition to in-person instruction. Think both/and. Use the LMS, but perhaps also shoot an email. Access to class materials on the first day is a key factor in student success. If you have any questions on textbook access or shipping options, please contact Chelsea Havner: havnerc@winthrop.edu.
- If you have not notified the bookstore yet of your textbook needs (including whether you are not requiring purchase of textbooks), please do so ASAP. Notifications are in your

email if they are still waiting to hear from you. If you have any questions on using the system after our recent updates, please contact David Hensley: hensleyd@winthrop.edu.

- 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. Faculty are encouraged to communicate with any students in their classes who are identified as non-compliant to ascertain impact on 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 and after an additional window of time allowing for students to address the compliance issue. Please send questions to Tim Druke: druket@winthrop.edu.
- Spring Break: I realize that one of the hardest things about this year has been responding to the frequent pivots in decision-making. When we first announced that we would make no changes to the spring schedule, we heard concerns expressed from faculty representatives regarding the risks associated with viral transmission spikes after travel. Indeed, we began our journey down the pandemic path as we watched spring travel lead to transmission spikes in March 2020. We said we would review the decision in early December as we developed a better sense of whether the pandemic positive test rates were declining or increasing. As South Carolina has its highest rolling positive averages ever, we made the decision to modify the spring schedule in two key areas.
 - **The remote start** allows us to build 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** minimizes travel. In November, FCUP communicated to the President and I that faculty were concerned that we had not cancelled spring break as other campuses had done. We assured them that we would revisit when we had more data. With today's data and the likelihood that rates will remain high through the spring semester, we are confident we have made the best decision for the safety of our campus community.
 - Why wellness days? We still believe breaks are important. We heard from faculty and from students that having no fall break was hard. Students need the time to reset. There is no more strenuous activity than using our brains in the process of learning! I encourage all faculty to think of ways to position those days in your syllabi as transition points, and not to assign extra work on those dates. I know you have very carefully crafted learning plans that will require tweaking. I have confidence that your creativity in this regard will benefit our students and ensure they have strong learning outcomes in the spring semester as a result.

- What about faculty furlough dates? Honoring spring break as a furlough week was one of the arguments for keeping spring break in our first decisions. With the current transmission rates, I stand by the pivot. Faculty may need to use wellness days for furlough or, as they often do during spring break, to catch up and regroup in order to see students into the final phase of learning in their courses. Thus, we should not rush to fill student wellness break days with meetings requiring faculty to attend.

Additional reminders for spring planning:

Marshall Jones shared some great product information in the Daily Digest on tools to support remote, hybrid, and online learning. [Check them out here!](#)

Look for ways to recuperate over the break. We have wonderful resources through our Employee Assistance Program, from financial planning to your own wellness needs (I've used TAO! It's great!). Instructions for how to access mygroup.com resources are found below:

EAP Access

Employees have access to counselors 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by calling 800-633-3353 or 704-529-1428. To access work-life services, log into [mygroup.com](#) using the username 'winthrop303' and password 'guest'.

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. While adhering to the 30/70 split as well as we can, we will continue to monitor student and faculty health concerns. If you have any questions, please work with your chairs and deans as your first point of contact when issues arise related to schedule adjustments.

Presidential compensation increase concerns:

You may have seen a recent article in [The State](#) newspaper reporting that several South Carolina college presidents and state agency heads will be receiving a pay increase in January. President Hynd is included in this group of state employees who will be receiving a pay increase. This increase was not performance based and was not implemented by Winthrop, but by the state Agency Head Salary Commission. Periodically, the state's Agency Head Salary Commission reviews the salaries of all agency heads in South Carolina. With the help of Korn-Ferry consultants, the commission completed a review over the summer and determined that the minimum pay band for Winthrop's category of university president needed to be updated. While the timing certainly resonates poorly with our budget austerity, this adjustment is not something we can refuse. Finally, it will help us as we look forward to the recruitment of our next permanent president.

Summer school 2021 and compensation proposal:

We are continuing to develop a summer compensation model that includes a flat compensation rate based on enrollment tiers as well as a revenue share. Since the FY21 budget did not include a revenue share model, we will not be implementing a new compensation model for summer

2021. However, we will be eliminating the 9% compensation rate for B session courses. We will seek feedback from faculty and chairs on the proposed new compensation and revenue share models in the early weeks of the spring semester, so that we can include a fully vetted new model and revenue share assumptions in the FY22 budget proposal for Finance Committee consideration and Board of Trustees approval in April 2021.

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.

Guided Transfer Pathways Project:

You keep hearing about work we are doing to cut budgets and become more efficient. Here is a bit of news on work we are doing to increase revenues. I have reached out to Stacey Moore, my counterpoint at York Tech. Both institutions are eager to strengthen our relationship and improve upon our transfer pathways. To that end, I am appointing an ad-hoc working group to move forward with the goal of building the collaborative framework that will move our institutions forward in identifying 5-10 transfer pathways with articulated agreements. We already have a [Bridge Program with York Tech](#). It's a good start. But we need specific pathways to fully leverage our respective strengths and see more students through to completion. More students with a clear pathway to completion at Winthrop is good for students, good for York Tech, and good for Winthrop! If you are interested in participating, please reach out to Greg Oakes, who will chair the ad-hoc committee, at oakesm@winthrop.edu.

Have a healthy, recuperative holiday season: Whether you celebrate Hanukah, Christmas, Diwali, Kwanzaa, Solstice, are looking forward to the Muslim holidays coming in the spring, or celebrate some combination or none of the above, I wish you peace and time for contemplation – with yourself and those you love.

Namaste.

Adrienne