

Greetings, colleagues.

I am thrilled to be writing to you all again on the cusp of a new academic year. It's late in the day, but I couldn't resist sending a Friday the 13th message – on a beautiful, late-summer Friday that does not feel at all like fall and is not so scary, when you have an attitude of gratitude. One of your colleagues shared with me how having an "attitude of gratitude" exercise briefly in each class helped keep spirits up through the Spring 2021 semester, and it has really stuck with me.

Despite the summer-like heat, I am grateful that fall 2021 is here, and I can't wait to welcome you all back next week. To that end, I hope you all will be joining us on Zoom on Monday, August 16, at 9 a.m., as my colleague Vice President of Student Affairs Shelia Higgs Burkhalter and I ring in the semester with a focus on **student success and wellness**, an exciting joint venture by and for Academic and Student Affairs faculty and staff and any other interested individuals. We heard you loud and clear last year – you wanted more resources on how to face the challenges of this moment. We will dive in on Monday. Here again is the public link: <https://winthrop-edu.zoom.us/j/82064770232>. Can't join us? Read this short piece from University Business on [5 ways students can seize control of their mental health](#), then look for our resources when we post them after the Kick-Off.

On Tuesday morning, President Hynd and CFO Justin Oates will join me in visiting each of the college faculty assemblies. We will also visit Dacus Library and Pettus Archives faculty and staff later in the week, and University College in early September. We will share a high-level overview of our goals for the year and the work we've been doing on the budget. The final budget will be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval on April 23rd, after which time we will plan more opportunities to share budget information more widely across the campus.

Early next week, you will hear from Tim Drueke regarding our plans for **Convocation**, which we will hold in the Coliseum on Monday, August 23rd, at 11 a.m. We will implement the same measures that allowed us to hold safe commencement ceremonies in May. The importance of engaging our students has never been higher, so we hope many of you will participate by attending or viewing the live-stream. Here's a short piece from AACU's Liberal Education BLOG that you may find inspiring, titled [This Fall, Aim for Engagement](#).

By now, you should have all received our updated **COVID Syllabus Statement** – which will be on the Blackboard institutional landing page for all students – as well as our **fall 2021 faculty reminders**, both of which I attach here as well. I know you have many questions and equal shares of excitement and trepidation as we once again see cases of COVID-19 on the rise in our region. We all must band together again to ensure our campus remains as safe this year as we kept it last year. I have great faith in you, and our students and staff, in following our strong recommendations, and the guidance of CDC and DHEC, to get vaccinated and mask up. The new [Return to Learn website](#) also has information on when our on-campus vaccination clinics will take place in the coming weeks. Thank you in advance for your continued vigilance as we continue to fight our way through this pandemic.

To end on a positive note, I am excited to share with you that a lot of change has been happening on campus and a lot of planning and innovation as well. At the request of the Board of Trustees, President Hynd and I are excited to launch [a Mission Statement Review project](#) this year, which will provide us a wonderful opportunity to hold conversations about what makes Winthrop a positive force in our community and in the lives of our students and employees. Jennifer Jordan has agreed to help with this important project as well, so you will hear more about this opportunity soon.

I will share more updates at the Faculty Conference on August 20. For now, have a great Friday the 13th and a restful final weekend before we are all back in action!

Best,
Adrienne