

Greetings, colleagues.

I had the opportunity to serve on a virtual on-site SACSCOC review committee this week for a public regional institution in Georgia. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet colleagues from other SACSCOC regional publics – from North Carolina, Florida, Alabama, and Texas – and to see another institution go through what we have been preparing for as we look forward to next spring and our reaffirmation visit. I wanted to take this opportunity to once again recognize all of the hard work that has gone into drafting statements for how we meet the standards for quality enhancement articulated in the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation. This work has not had nearly the visibility or central focus it would have had if we were not still navigating the significant ebbs and flows of the pandemic. I learned a great deal working with this team, and now it's time to turn my attention back to Winthrop.

I spent the past three days learning a great deal about how another institution responded to the challenges of the past year. You have likely spent the past few days feeling like you're in one of those flying pirate ships at Carowinds...being whipped back and forth from the ebullience of scheduling vaccine appointments, or perhaps even getting your first shot, to the consternation regarding yet another significant adjustment to our best laid plans.

I had a great conversation with Adolphus yesterday and was inspired by some of his words. I will do my best here to paraphrase our conversation and give him shared credit for the following reflections.

We discussed trust. We discussed grace. We discussed the need to extend to each other some of the same trust and grace so many of us are extending to our students in this most unprecedented of times. Students have needed a little grace to surmount the challenges they are facing. You have given it to them and seen them through an incredible disruptive time. We all need a little grace to see each other through the volatility of this moment. We do not have all of the answers to all of the questions. We may not have all of the answers to *half* of the questions. But grace we can muster. And trust grows from extension; it must be offered to be received. I have deep trust in you as stewards of student learning and as committed citizens of our campus community. I hope you will join with me and Adolphus – administrator and faculty – in extending each other a bit of grace, an openness to trust – that we are in this together to see Winthrop beyond the challenges of the day.

As Provost, I cannot divulge every solution we as senior leaders are considering in response to your current concerns and those of the recent (and maybe not so recent) past. But please know that we are working constantly toward the goal of a safe, sustainable, thriving Winthrop University.

We will continue to share news of our transitions back to in-person workspaces as our plans continue to evolve. But I can share a few points here:

- For faculty members, you retain the same scheduling flexibility that you had pre-COVID, as long as you remain available to your students, adhere to departmental and college expectations, and deliver your courses as currently scheduled.

- For staff and administrative colleagues, we are working to ensure the safest return possible. Many of your colleagues have been working full-time on campus throughout the pandemic and have remained safe due to our effective protocols. We will maintain those protocols until we are confident they can be relaxed.
- For meetings, you may continue to use the new flexibility our many digital platforms of engagement afford us, until we are able to relax the safety measures we have put in place. We remain proud of the efforts we have taken to protect all Winthrop workers.
- If you have loaned technology, hold onto it until you receive direct guidance from IT.
- On the bright side, I will be excited to see more of your masked faces on Scholars' Walk and crossing other campus paths in the weeks and months to come.

I close with an event I encourage you to consider attending. Your colleagues in the College of Business Administration had great things to say about Dr. Jackson's workshop, so I asked if we could extend her expertise on "Psychological First Aid" more broadly to the campus community. She graciously agreed. Thank you, Dr. Jackson! See below for how to register.

Title: Psychological First Aid for Faculty, Staff, & Students

Date/Time: Friday, March 26th, 2:00 – 3:00 PM

Description: The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to an already ongoing mental health crisis and has put a unique strain on the personal and professional roles of faculty and staff in higher education. Prior to the pandemic, one in ten adults reported symptoms of anxiety and depression, currently, four in ten individuals reported these symptoms. Moreover, students aged 18-24 who are already at increased risk for mental illness, are now even more likely to report symptoms of anxiety, depression, suicidality, and substance use disorders. Faculty are perfectly positioned to help each other and students after a disaster, crisis, emergency, and now a pandemic. Integrating Psychological First Aid (PFA) with Autonomy-Supportive Teaching can help reduce stress and anxiety in and out of the classroom. In this session, we will talk openly about our stress responses to unprecedented large-scale quarantine, fear of illness, loss of loved ones, and our collective lives together. Join us on March 26th, at 2 PM to listen, protect, and connect with each other first, and then students. This discussion will be led by Dr. Joanna Jackson, Assistant Professor of Healthcare Management.

Sign Up at <https://apps.winthrop.edu/cpe/>

Don't forget: [Provost Virtual Office Hour](#), 9:30 - 10:30 a.m., Fridays.

Have a great weekend,

Adrienne