

May Day! May Day! We made it to May Day! This is the first of many future Friday Features from Faculty Conference Chair Adolphus Belk and Provost Adrienne McCormick, bringing you short updates and inspirational fare from the week. I am happy to report that April, which has long been known as the cruelest month, is in the rear-view mirror. Please join me in celebrating a new day, a new month, and the new possibilities it holds.

Readiness planning:

In Academic Affairs, we can report that plans are underway to make sure we are ready for the final term of summer session and Fall 2020 course delivery, regardless of what happens with the many unknowns that are impacting our decisions. That means we are preparing contingencies for our contingencies, so when we know more, we are ready with next steps in place. For summer, that means being ready with a plan to shift to continued remote learning, cancel, and/or put social distancing options in place for some of our planned learning activities to continue, if we are not cleared to return in July. We are also building plans for when we are cleared to return. What will return look like? How will we continue work and instruction with some degree of social distancing? HR is drafting answers to these questions and so is ALC as we think about classrooms and the many places learning happens.

For Fall, we are modeling how many faculty we could train for switching classes to online modalities, but I am also paying close attention to national conversations about how to retain that "high-touch" feel campuses like ours are known for if the virus continues to impact our normal operations. A [recent article in Inside Higher Ed](#) was particularly on point in exploring this question. We need to be ready with a blend: training as many faculty as possible with high quality online learning skills, and also leveraging those same skills to support the quality of remote interfaces in classes where the "fully online experience" may not be the right answer. These are tough decisions to make in short time-frames, but my commitment is to retaining the quality of the Winthrop experience. That quality has always been rooted in a diverse set of learning modalities. I am sure with the brain-trust we have at our finger-tips, that we will be ready to provide those learning experiences in the Fall--whatever comes. But whatever comes, faculty who need additional supports to provide quality online or planned face-to-face courses with blended modes of learning that can pivot in response to changing conditions will get the training and supports they need.

Celebrating our graduates:

Tim Drueke worked with a sub-team of the Commencement Committee on a proposal for a virtual celebration of our graduates. Ellen Wilder-Byrd has a request in today's Daily Digest. If your unit has created some end-of-year content for your students, and especially for those graduating, we would like to feature it on a common site that UCM is creating. Please send your videos and other digital content to Ellen Wilder-Byrd. Please reach out to Tim Drueke with

questions. Let's congratulate our graduates and help ease the sting of commencement being postponed!

Faculty accommodations:

Adolphus and I requested input from our Committee on Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Promotion on how to accommodate faculty in light of disruptions to their productivity. Guidance will be coming very soon on ways we are stream-lining faculty annual reports, for those colleges that have not yet submitted them. We will also provide more details on accommodations for faculty as you look ahead to preparing for next year's faculty evaluation processes. As with all other areas, we will adapt appropriately and provide clarity as we look at existing processes in light of current circumstances. I charge us all to see opportunity in the midst of crisis...to strengthen our processes, build resilience, and see new ways of meeting our mission in this volatile moment.

Wellness reminders:

Finally, a reminder from Adolphus: this labor has placed all of us under considerable stress. Thus, as you take care of your families and tend to your Winthrop responsibilities **please remember to take care of yourselves**. Among other things, [the Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) recommends](#) that we take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about the pandemic. In addition, it suggests we take care of our bodies, make time to unwind, and connect with people we trust to talk about our concerns or feelings. The CDC also advises that we tend to our mental health—especially if we have preexisting mental health conditions. These are the sorts of behaviors that will help us persevere.

And from Adrienne: Give yourself permission to have a life. Now more than ever, boundaries between time for work and time for self are blurred. In academia, most of us do not work 9 to 5 jobs in the most "normal" circumstances. And normal is not what we've got now. It's okay to step away and help a child with an assignment (or a more basic need!). It's okay to vary your schedule to allow time for exercise (in fact, it's encouraged!). It's okay to set a turn-off time and step away, even if 50 things are in varying stages of incomplete. This last one is very hard for me to do! But I do it every day. Here is the link to wellness resources from Winthrop HR, including our MyGroup plan with counseling and advice on many topics: <https://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/hr/time-leave/COVID-19-Wellness-Resources.pdf>

Have a great weekend, all, and a strong finish to Spring 2020.

Adrienne and Adolphus

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