

Friday Features: purpose, planning, and poetry (plus fluid instruction webinar link)

Greetings, all.

For some of you, the annual report is now complete and you've had a week to breathe. I hope you have some relaxing plans for the long weekend. Others are busy with summer session and working on postponed projects. Adolphus is turning his attention this summer to his hip hop book project (I can't wait to see it!) and will rejoin our Friday messages when we return in the Fall. Others still are strengthening their skills in digital pedagogies and online learning to be ready for the new flexibilities our current moment requires of us. Please know that we in Academic and Senior Leadership are also working hard to prepare for Fall 2020. If you have not had a chance to look at the phased return guidance provided by Human Resources, please take a look at the information provided on their website: <https://www.winthrop.edu/hr/covid19.aspx>

There are two additional points of information I'd like to share with you in my message this week:

1) Take time to rejuvenate and touch back in with what gives you a sense of purpose and joy in the work you have chosen. We are all in education for a reason, a drive or commitment that brought us to work in an environment where educating students is the primary objective. For many of the faculty, your instructional experience was very different in the Spring and may have left you feeling distanced from students and colleagues, mentally and physically exhausted, and questioning how well you met your objectives. That is no doubt a widely shared experience! But the distance we are all practicing makes it a challenge to connect with others around this experience. Please look for ways to share your concerns with others in your programs, departments, colleges, or peer cohorts across your profession. Just as I say to students at every opportunity, don't be afraid to explore your failures and probe at the edges of where you feel you didn't measure up to your own expectations. Those places can be very generative to mine as we think about how to improve next time. While we all strive to meet our full productivity goals, sometimes it's a major achievement just to meet the baseline expectations. While that may be tough for the average type-A-faculty-overachiever to swallow, know that what you achieved for and alongside our students this past Spring is okay! I encourage you to look for advice on how to cope with fatigue and burn-out in our campus resources and in professional journals. Here is a link to a recent article from The Chronicle that addresses some strategies for responding to COVID-19 burn-out: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-to-Cope-With-Covid-19/248814?cid=wcontentlist>



How to Cope With Covid-19 Burnout - The Chronicle of Higher Education

A faculty member shares her story of burnout, and how she overcame

it, as a way to help others who feel exhausted, and sometimes disillusioned, by the shift to remote teaching.

www.chronicle.com

In the article, Rebecca Pope-Ruark, who researches burn-out and recovery strategies, remarks that:

“People are just exhausted and can’t understand why they can’t do what they used to do,” she says. “We’re not taking the time to celebrate our accomplishments. We’re not taking the time to be open.”

So let go of traditional notions of productivity, she advises. Connect with others. Show compassion, but set boundaries. And find your sense of purpose.

It's that sense of purpose I want to both commend and encourage you to ponder, as a way to stave off the fatigue, frustration, and in some instances, grief you may be feeling about the lost contact with your students. I am sure it is similar for many staff, who also take joy from their direct connections with students and colleagues on a daily basis. For you as well, I hope this guidance is useful.

2) Academic Leadership has drafted a Fall 2020 Academic Affairs Plan to guide institutional decisions as we weigh what the Fall will bring. It includes recommendations on the following: calendar and course schedule adjustments; our mix of course modalities for Fall instruction; needed supports for students, staff, and faculty; physical distancing requirements for in-person offerings and events; retention planning; and resource alignments. We will be sharing these details out soon.

Many of you may feel like the famous "tim'rous beastie" addressed by Robert Burns in "To a Mouse," whose well-planned home was unearthed by the plow. This is where we get the famous phrase that "The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men, / Gang aft agley" (you can read the whole poem here: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43816/to-a-mouse-56d222ab36e33>). While our Spring 2020 certainly went "agley" from what we had planned, I know we have the talent to be prepared for whatever disruptions Fall 2020 may bring. To that end, if you are wondering how to prepare for unexpected disruptions, consider registering for the [fluid instruction webinar](#) that the Center for Professional Excellence has lined up from Innovative Educators, which will provide you with some tools for shifting between learning modes while still meeting your course objectives. This webinar will take place on June 3. Free registration can be accessed at this link: <https://www.innovativeeducators.org/products/preparing-for-flexible-course-delivery-teaching-online-or-on-campus>. Also, there are seats available in June and July sessions of our WOTC classes, which provide a stream-lined version of the required training for fully online and hybrid course preparations.

I will close with a poem by one of my all-time favorite writers, Lucille Clifton. For your Friday edification, please enjoy a poem from her collection titled *Quilting: Poems 1987-1990*. In "blessing the boats," Clifton gifts us with a reflection on persistence using as her canvas the waters of the St. Mary's River, which feeds the Potomac and Chesapeake Bay, and sailboats on the shores of St. Mary's College of Maryland. We have had a week of water, but the sun is back. We will be too.

. *blessing the boats*

[Lucille Clifton](#) - 1936-2010

(at St. Mary's)

may the tide
that is entering even now
the lip of our understanding
carry you out
beyond the face of fear
may you kiss
the wind then turn from it
certain that it will
love your back may you
open your eyes to water
water waving forever
and may you in your innocence
sail through this to that

<https://poets.org/poem/blessing-boats>