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Sent: Friday, July 31, 2020 10:20 AM
To: Faculty-Staff
Subject: Friday Features: On Flying Buttresses as a State of Being

Hello All,

A reminder again that my office hour lasts until 10:30 today. Please join me [on Teams](#) over the next 15 minutes if you have questions or any topics you'd like to discuss with me.

I'm writing with a focus on recent communications that have gone out to students and to highlight the fact that the [Return to Learn website](#) is now live! Please check out the rich detail provided on that site for many of the answers we shared with students and parents last night in our most recent town hall. You will find a transcript of my comments from the town hall and a compilation of the Academic Affairs questions received from students below. I thought you would find it helpful to see what students were asking and how I responded. Vice President for Student Affairs Shelia Burkhalter also spoke at length and shared details about residence life and student safety protocols, as well as how dining services, student engagement, and campus life more broadly will function under our return plans. We had 500 attendees and will provide additional town halls to answer questions as we get closer to our students' physical return to campus.

This week, I also emailed students directly to provide guidance on what to do if they want to change their course schedules in order to remain remote for the whole semester. I provided contact information for our deans, student services offices, and in some instances department chairs as the people to reach out to and *not* their individual course instructors. You can see more detail about our advising protocols in the paragraphs below. In short, we have seen a sea change from students saying we had too many courses online (earlier in the summer) to not enough courses online (now). As we make additional adjustments, we will likely hear additional concerns expressed. In this moment, there is little we can do that will satisfy all students—or all employees—since what we all yearn for is a return to what we knew well and loved about our jobs and learning environments. I will say it again: we need to embrace the 180s and dig deep to find the creative energy that will bolster our own resiliency and prepare us to support our students as we forge on together. I find myself thinking of [flying buttresses](#). With the right supports in the right places, impossibly heavy loads can be sustained and make it possible to build something new.

We are gathering data on online course demand to inform decisions on which additional courses to push online as we enact our pivot plans for the delayed in-person start. If you're not following other institutions of higher ed in the state, many others have also now announced delays, including Coastal Carolina, Francis Marion, SC State, and most recently College of Charleston. An EAB session I attended yesterday shared that their early summer polls showed more than 60% of institutions planning a face-to-face return for fall 2020; that number is now less than 2.5% nationally. We are not alone in navigating the formidable challenges of reimagining how we deliver constant quality in our teaching and learning, nor in finding sustainable ways to respond to enrollment and revenue volatility resulting

from this world-changing pandemic.

Also, don't forget that EAB's website now includes a [COVID-19 resource center](#) regardless of your area of focus on campus. Login using your Winthrop email address.

For anyone teaching a course in fall 2020, the [Remote Instruction Resource Center](#) provides useful tools, with specific guidance on how to navigate short, medium, and long-term remote instruction planning.

I will end with a final note on our quarantine and isolation plans. We are no longer planning to house students on campus if they must quarantine or isolate due to onset of symptoms or a positive test result. When at all possible, students will quarantine and isolate at their off-campus homes, not in any residence hall. They are asked to put a return plan in place with their family members in the event they are asked to quarantine or isolate. As with all things, there will be exceptions to this, so we will use Wofford Hall to house those exceptions.

One final reminder: We will *not* make public announcements about positive cases, as President Hynd noted in previous communications to campus. We are partnering with the Medical University of South Carolina in a consulting relationship to review our entire Return to Learn plan, including mitigation protocols that we have put in place.

Student/parent Town Hall transcript of Academic Affairs questions and answers:

[Introductory remarks]

The first group of questions I will address involve our academic calendar, our mix of course offerings, and how to make changes to your course selections if you need or choose to remain remote for the fall 2020 semester.

Even though we are delaying the start of any in-person instruction until September 8, the calendar changes that have been approved will remain in place and are available to view on the campus website. I want to remind graduate students in our online programs that no changes were made to your approved calendar.

For all other new students, we will hold a virtual convocation event and many of our beginning of the year meetings on Monday, August 24th, and all in-person, hybrid, and online classes will commence via fully remote offerings on Tuesday, August 25th. The current plan is for students to shift to in-person and hybrid offerings on Tuesday, September 8. You will hear more about move-in planning from the Vice President for Student Affairs, whose comments will come next.

Faculty and staff have spent the entire summer preparing for this very unique Fall semester. Staff members have offered additional online training courses, and our faculty have enrolled in droves to make sure they are ready to offer you high quality online and hybrid courses. Anyone teaching an online or hybrid course with 25% or more online material was required to take our online training course sequence. Their resulting courses are all assessed using the Blackboard Exemplary Course Program Rubric, so I can say with confidence that your experience in the Fall in online courses will be very different from the rapid transition we made to remote learning in Spring 2020. We have provided webinars on fluid instruction, and faculty have taken advantage of many free training opportunities that were made available for faculty across the nation to develop their skillsets to ensure we continue to meet your learning needs, no matter what COVID battle continues. Faculty all were also required to develop individual pivot plans for each hybrid and in-person course—which we are now enacting due to the delayed start of in-person classes.

We know many more of you want to take online courses at this point than when we first rolled out the Fall 2020 mix. We are doing our best to be fluid and responsive to your needs as we continue to adjust the mix of in-person, hybrid, and online courses available in Fall.

I want to say again that it's very important to reach out to your college student services offices, department chairs, and/or deans with your questions about course modality changes, rather than to individual faculty. Deans and department chairs are working with faculty to implement the following steps as students reach out and request fully online schedules:

1. The first step will be to place students into as many existing online courses as we can to keep you on track to meet degree requirements and make steady progress.
2. As we go, we will collect data on additional demand for online courses, add seats to existing sections, and add more courses as needed to meet demand.
3. Department Chairs and/or student services staff will work with students to make schedule modifications and problem-solve.
4. Chairs and staff will work with students to consider whether a *course not available online* in Fall 2020—such as clinical placements, athletic training requirements, some labs, dance, etc.—could be taken in Spring 2021; for students graduating in December 2020, they will explore petition options *where possible* to satisfy degree completion needs. This is why it is so important for students to connect with their student services offices, department chair, and/or Dean for specific guidance at this time. Please do not start with your individual faculty members as they do not necessarily know how best to advise you on all of your options. Use the links I sent out via email most recently to get in touch with the staff who are best positioned to help with your advising needs.

Some students asked if they can simply *not* attend the in-person portion of hybrid classes.

Unfortunately, the answer is no. If a course is hybrid, you must attend the in-person and online portions of the course. Work with your college contacts to start these conversations and explore your options.

Some students and parents asked questions about Spring 2021. We have already started Spring 2021 schedule planning and will address online, hybrid, and in-person modality questions with individual students as we enter into the Spring 2021 course selection process.

Cultural Events: Many of you submitted questions about Cultural Events requirements. The Cultural Events Committee has created guidance on how to satisfy cultural events requirements in the midst of COVID. Students who are graduating in December 2020 will have 9 cultural events credits waived. We will also provide virtual cultural events options for students to maintain progress during Fall 2020. Look to the Cultural Events website for more information. Any in-person cultural events will have to comply with all campus safety regulations.

Policy Questions: A few questions came in about policy adjustments. For the attendance policy, faculty will be notified by our Dean of Students Office when students are in quarantine and/or isolation. Remote access will be provided for any students who are in quarantine and/or in isolation and are well enough to do work. Instructions on how to access the course remotely will be provided by the individual instructor.

Attendance for online courses and remote access is determined also by faculty members who set the appropriate expectations for course participation depending on how much of the course is synchronous versus asynchronous.

Students will not be penalized for being ill, but they will still have to complete the course requirements in order to get credit for the courses. We will support students through this as we do with any other illness or event that requires missing class meetings or scheduled assignments.

Another policy question asked was whether we would continue our modifications to allowing additional S/U elections. We are going to extend the S/U elections and withdrawal deadlines to the last day of classes for Fall 2020, as we did for Spring 2020. This and other guidance is on the Registrar's website.

Classroom/ safety planning /masking: All Winthrop classrooms and instructional spaces (including computer labs) have been assessed in order to lower the maximum room capacities. In rooms with movable furniture, we have reset desks in order to comply with physical distancing expectations. In rooms with fixed seating, we will mark seats which can be used and close off aisles to ensure distancing is observed. We are following CDC and DHEC guidance designed specifically for institutions of higher education.

While computer labs will be available, we will reduce occupancy in those spaces to ensure distancing. We encourage all students to bring their own laptop and to check with your home departments on minimum specifications. Some devices don't have the storage capacity to handle specialized and some basic software packages. We will make laptops available for check-out as we did in Spring 2020 for any students who do not have their own devices.

Faculty will be provided kits that will travel with them to supplement classroom cleaning that will take place each day by custodial staff. Students and faculty will be asked to clean their own desk and work spaces at the beginning of each class, using materials supplied by Environmental Health and Safety and our partners in Facilities Management. All of our return plans will be reviewed by Medical University of South Carolina staff in a formal consulting relationship.

Dacus Library and Pettus Archives will be open for students to use. We will encourage expanded use of library spaces to ensure distancing protocols are followed and to avoid congestion in prime study areas. The library is following guidelines established for circulation materials that require a four-day hold for returned items. One big change is that courses will not use reserves, so many more materials will be provided using open access and digital resources whenever possible. Please see the Dacus website for additional guidance, including access to our book-a-librarian and virtual chat features.

The College of Visual and Performing Arts is working with the Department of Theatre and Dance on program specific needs for students. Some questions came in about dance in particular, and I can tell you that each studio is being marked off so dancers have 10 feet of distance between them. Classes will be hybrid and split into ½ students one day, ½ the next. Masks will be worn by faculty and students. Students are encouraged to start getting used to exercising with a mask before they return to campus by doing some minimal work with while masked. Studio floors and barres will be mopped and wiped between each class.

The leadership in Winthrop Think College and other programs with unique learning outcomes and cohorts have also been making program-specific plans. The coordinators of those programs are best positioned to answer your specific questions. If you are unsure who to ask about anything, please don't hesitate to email me personally and I will get you to the right contact person.

One person asked whether professors will ask students to wear their masks correctly. The answer is yes. We all need to work together as a community to stop the spread. We have given very specific guidance to faculty on how to approach students if they show up to classes, events, or in their offices without wearing a mask. Guidance on how to wear a mask and how to clean reusable masks will be provided to

all students. With that, I will turn to my colleague and the Vice President for Student Affairs, Shelia Burkhalter.

Questions that were submitted about academic calendar and course modalities: (answers provided above; bolded language below will inform FAQs for the website).

- Winthrop faculty have been asked which mode of teaching they prefer (in-person or virtual) for the fall semester. Subsequently, faculty responses have been taken into consideration in the planned delivery of fall classes. For students who prefer/require a virtual delivery of class instruction, what are the accommodations so that virtual delivery is provided for the entire semester? **Shifting to fully online classes as much as possible. More are being added.**
- ~~If~~ *When* coronavirus cases on campus begin in the fall, are students who do not feel safe allowed to choose to attend their classes via a virtual format? Or should students withdraw for the semester? Or will students be forced to continue to complete their classes on campus? **Already answered by shift to remote and online options.**
- Why are we not being informed better about our classes converting to hybrid form?
- Since online classes are not only feasible, but successful (see Winthrop Online Programs website), why has the University not made use of the time since the lockdown to prepare the faculty for fully online instruction?? **We have used every minute.**
- If faculty are all planning to be prepared for virtual instruction anyway; why is Winthrop forcing students, faculty, and staff to return when online is planned for anyway? **Already answered by shift to remote.**
- If a student is willing to pay more money to pay a higher tuition cost for in-person or hybrid classes to instead be delivered virtually, will this be an option? **No tuition differentials, either up or down, are planned.**
- If Winthrop University decides to go virtual in the future, will the current calendar that excludes Fall Break still be followed? **Yes. Current calendar remains the same.**
- Hybrid classes still have a face to face component. How do students who cannot go back to campus because of their immunocompromised health and the health of their families email teachers on providing an online class option instead of hybrid? How do students get remote access to their courses during the entire semester? **Students should reach out to student services, Chairs, and Deans to discuss schedule changes.**
- For students in their last year of undergraduate studies who cannot come back to campus because of their immunocompromised health and the health of their families, how can they gain remote access to their courses for the entire year? **Students should reach out to student services, Chairs, and Deans to discuss schedule changes, petitions, and degree completion options.**
- As an extremely concerned parent due to the pandemic regarding the Coronavirus, what is Winthrop's game plan in the event of an outbreak? With the amount of personal interaction amongst students I am very concerned for my daughter's help and well-being. Is there an online class option for parents who do not want to take the chance on their student returning? She is currently majoring in Athletic Training and I understand that clinicals and taping labs are required. Would it not be possible for her to complete these at a local hospital, clinic, or an orthopedist's office? **Degree-specific clinical requirements will be addressed by the specific department chairs and Deans, ensuring compliance with accreditation requirements.**
- Will the option of moving classes online be offered to those students who are not comfortable to return back to campus? **Already answered.**
- Are some of the classes being moved online? **Already answered.**

- For students registered for courses they need and they are not offering an online option, what happens then? What if the department heads and the deans do not accommodate student needs? **Included in answer.**
- Students registered for classes that have a hybrid instructional method, will they be penalized for not attending those days class is held in the classroom if they cannot come back to campus for health and fear of contracting the virus? **If a student is registered for a hybrid course and cannot attend the in-person meetings, they must make look for alternate online sections. If unavailable, they need to contact student support staff.**

Cultural Events Questions submitted:

- Will you be offering online cultural events or changing the required numbers for Seniors?
- Will cultural events still be held? How are cultural events to be handled in the future?
- I am a senior who still has at least 10 cultural events to complete. I obviously lost 2 months of events that I could have attended last school year due to COVID-19 closures. Will cultural events be held this year? I will not be on campus for common time as I am an education major and will be in my internship. I am worried about meeting the 18 cultural event minimum.
- Will students still be required to attend cultural events to graduate? Will that requirement be waived for students who cannot come back to campus?
- How are cultural event requirements being amended for students who are graduating within the next year?

Policy Questions submitted:

- How will absences and grades be handled if a student tests positive?
- Will the Universities absence policy be altered so those who get sick, or have symptoms, can stay home to protect others without the fear of being penalized or failing the course?
- Has there been any further discussion about extending the S/U elections or withdrawal deadlines through this semester for students? Or at least the ability to elect more than one course for an S/U if not a first semester freshman?

Classroom/ safety planning /masking Questions submitted:

- What is the protocol if classes are not socially distanced?
- How is Winthrop going to maintain social distancing in classrooms?
- How will students in dance classes/fitness classes wear a mask while still allowing for proper breathing, hydration, and preventing over heating? If masks are not required to be worn during physical activity, will the social distancing protocol go from 6ft to 12ft as recommended when there is a lot of heavy breathing breathing/forced air? As a dance major, this matter is extremely important to me.
- My son Dakota is in the college think program. I am sure I am speaking for many families and students when I ask, what steps have you as the college put in place to keep them safe? Are you as the college going to supply masks, or do we need to purchase mask for them? Also, I am sure most understand how bad this Covid-19 is, however, we just want to make sure if they come back to college that they will be guided and explained very well the protocol to where they understand it.
- A lot of people I see are wearing masks the wrong way. Masks are being worn below the nose or below the chin. Will professors/faculty members enforce the effective way to wear masks when they come into contact with students wearing it incorrectly?
- Will the library be open for student use? If so, what services will be limited (book/laptop rentals, etc.) and what policies will be in place to adhere to CDC guidelines?

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