



OFFICE of the PROVOST

Message from the Provost

Colleagues:

Unprecedented is a word that has been used too often to describe what we are experiencing, but there are few words that capture the climate quite so well. There are examples throughout history of storms, epidemics, wars, all challenging the resources and resolve of humankind. During the years that I have been at the University of West Florida as a faculty member and an administrator, I have seen the University community come together in amazing ways to face unforeseen challenges as we did in the wake of Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. Here we are again. With regard to COVID-19, you know that all of this is fluid and dynamic, and higher education has not always been known to respond nimbly to external forces of change. That is not the case with us.

Our divisional response will be seen as a collective effort, but we all know that collective effort is composed of individuals who are working hard to make a difference in their own respective ways. If it is difficult to describe the current situation, it is even harder to find words to express the pride I feel in how everyone in Academic Affairs has risen to this challenge. Faculty members, many of whom have taught only face-to-face courses, are creatively delivering courses. Faculty who are experienced in the online world are helping their colleagues. Within short order, faculty were able to get support via boot camp sessions. Deans and chairs have worked tirelessly to coordinate and deploy the strategies that allow us to carry out our primary mission. Great questions are being asked in the most professional and collegial ways. Staff members are finding ways to accomplish critical work remotely. We are doing great work! Who would have thought two weeks ago that we would be moving ahead with such alacrity? I know firsthand the challenge of being told to move one's course to an alternate mode of delivery. In my case, it may not be perfect, but it is happening. The educational mission is driven by our passion for our disciplines, and that is a wonderful motivator.

Ironically, we face both information overload and a dearth of information. Please stay connected to the University's information channels and your colleagues. There are many questions yet to be answered about how the semester will close, and we are working to get those resolved with the fewest unintended consequences.

Thank you for being an integral part of this wonderful enterprise we call higher education and for being part of UWF's efforts to provide life-changing education to our students. I know our students are and will be amazed and inspired, as I am, by the innovative, collaborative, and caring ways in which we are facing the worldwide challenges of COVID-19 and all that those challenges mean for the academic enterprise at the University of West Florida.

Very best regards,
George

March 19, 2020