



OFFICE of the PROVOST

Division of Academic Affairs Update

Dear Academic Affairs Colleagues:

I hope this update finds each one of you focused on safety and good health. The uncertainties continue to affect us all. I want to emphasize again the need for flexibility and shared responsibility as we navigate our way in this environment. I urge you to review [UWF's Mission, Vision, and Values](#). I also want to remind all of us that there is a wealth of information on [UWF's Coronavirus website](#).

We continue to plan for a successful fall semester, and I will begin with the good news that fall enrollment appears to be strong. A key to this positive news is providing courses in a variety of modalities. We are in the final stages of preparing classrooms. Plexiglass shields have been ordered for podiums, webcams have arrived to expand the remote capability of many classrooms, and social distancing plans are in place for classrooms and labs. In addition, plans are being finalized for cleaning classrooms between classes. We are also purchasing an enterprise Zoom license that would be available for faculty, staff, and student use. Multiple units and many of our colleagues across the institution have invested a tremendous amount of time and effort to prepare for a fall startup that is as safe and smooth as possible.

There are other updates on several fronts. Denise Seabert, dean of the Usha Kundu, MD College of Health, has taken another position. We wish her well in this new chapter. College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities Dean Steve Brown will serve as the interim dean. You may recall that Dean Brown served in this capacity previously, and he is already working with UKCOH personnel to continue to move the college forward in positive ways.

The Division of Academic Affairs will be the new home for units formerly housed in the Division of Research and Strategic Innovation. Moving these units into our division will provide stronger support for teaching, research, and service.

The gubernatorial veto of the nearly \$30 million Complete Florida Plus Program has triggered intense work to make certain that essential services remain available while bringing UWF's management of the program to a close. The Board of Governors, the Florida College System, and UWF are collaborating on this project. This is a work in progress, but universities and colleges will be required to provide funding for the integrated library system, for example, that previously was provided by the state. As part of over one billion dollars carved from the State of Florida budget by vetoes, UWF's Office of Economic Development and Engagement (OEDE) lost its remaining funding. Importantly, two key academic programs survived the veto process. Mechanical Engineering and the FSU-UWF Physician Assistant program will continue to be funded.

In addition to the vetoes, the economic impact of COVID-19 will be with us for some time. The governor has also instituted a 6% holdback for all state agencies. This applies to UWF and all State

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University System institutions. This holdback for our institution is approximately \$5 million. This means that our primary focus must be on our core mission. It also means that maintaining and increasing enrollment is crucial to the health of our university. Importantly, this may not be the holdback ceiling, but that remains to be seen.

These are difficult times, but I keep coming back to the fact that we have remained open and operational when many sectors of the economy have been shuttered. Yet, as the state's economy continues to struggle, the burden for keeping us viable will fall more and more on our willingness and ability to carry out our core mission efficiently.

We all feel the stresses and strains in this uncertain climate. Even small inconveniences can feel like a burden, perhaps because the COVID world is filled with so many uncertainties. But all of the measures we are taking as citizens and UWF employees are part of the mutual responsibility that we have to keep one another as safe as we can. We will continue to assess and reassess our reopening plans as we navigate the changing environment. Thank you for your dedication to our students, to the Division of Academic Affairs, and to the University of West Florida.

With best regards,
George

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