



OFFICE of the PROVOST

Spring Update from the Provost

Dear Academic Affairs Colleagues:

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We are well into 2021. Classes are in full swing, and we continue to serve our students with the best possible educational opportunities. Spring enrollment is up 4.6% overall.

It is evident that we are all continuing to take COVID-19 seriously, as we must, in order to protect ourselves and those close to us. I think we all hoped on some level that 2021 would begin with startlingly positive news on the health front, but we also knew that was probably not realistic. Still, there appears to be light at the end of the tunnel, but it is a long tunnel by any account. This is all the more reason to follow those guidelines that we are so familiar with now—face coverings, handwashing and social distancing.

We continue to balance the expressed desire of many students and faculty to have face-to-face classes with the need to social distance and to keep safety at the forefront of our actions. We are offering more face-to-face or hybrid sections this semester, particularly at the undergraduate level. ITS installed technology upgrades in many classrooms over the holiday break to facilitate more effective instruction. Our facilities staff members continue to clean classrooms regularly and our online support unit is constantly refining assistance for virtual teaching.

CDC guidelines will help inform fall course scheduling. At the moment, social distancing is still in place and vaccinations are in process in the state. Summer will look much like spring. The fall semester may look more normal, but that depends, as you know, on numerous factors that are still in flux. Flexibility remains imperative.

The Florida legislative session is underway. It is early in the session, but at the forefront for the State University System are the higher education budget and the legislation related to research and exchange programs with other nations. Other bills that campuses are watching relate to intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity, as well as legislation regarding weapons on campus. The legislature has also focused attention on the BOG Programs of Strategic Emphasis list.

Let me also share a few divisional updates.

I want to make certain everyone is aware of the timeline for the Usha Kundu, MD College of Health dean search. A committee will be formed and preparations made for a 2021-2022 academic year search that will end with a late-summer or early-fall 2022 begin date. I hope that we will be able to hold in-person meetings and interviews as we search for this crucial position. Dean Steve Brown's interim leadership of the college is greatly appreciated. I am pleased to inform you that Vice

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President for University Advancement Howard Reddy has agreed to chair this search. VP Reddy knows the college well and is familiar with its strong community connections.

Many conferences are requesting paper and session proposals. While the fall conference environment is still uncertain, the best advice at the moment is to submit proposals. The Campus Recovery Taskforce is monitoring travel conditions, but we all hope that by fall, there will be opportunities to attend conferences. Within our division, the [Rite of Passage](#) lectures will take place in a virtual format on March 5 and [Honors Convocation](#) on March 26. You will hear news about Commencement planning soon.

We all understand that we work in an environment that has many accountability requirements. A key responsibility that we share is to do our part to keep the IT infrastructure secure. It sounds trite, perhaps, but UWF's security is only as strong as its weakest link. Universities are under constant threat of cyber attacks. Please complete or update your Certified Knowledge Worker training as required.

I want to thank our Faculty Senate for providing input on the second round of federal funding, known as the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF). Senate representatives are also involved in ongoing budget discussions.

As we continue to face COVID-19 restrictions and uncertainties, please take care of yourselves and those around you. The Employee Assistance Program provides a variety of services to all employees. The contact number is 800.272.7252.

Thank you for your continued focus on educating and supporting our students in this challenging environment.

With respect and best regards,

George

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