

30 March 2020

Colleagues~

In the fall I was new and wanted to take time to get to know people on campus before visiting your mailbox. I made a lot of progress and was looking forward to a “welcome back” message for spring semester, once the energy of the first week calmed down and our pace became “normal.” Normal has never come.



The novel coronavirus and COVID-19 were still news-from-elsewhere when I began drafting this a month ago; no day's news has been the same as the day before. The college is embarked on a reinvention of itself as all instruction moves online; administrative approval processes are leaving paper behind and going electronic; we visit each other's homes through our Zoom glimpses into our colleagues' home life—we see their spouses, their kids, their cats: there is a certain humanizing of this.

Our challenges are sobering. We have *hundreds* of faculty (well over a *thousand* when we count our part-time colleagues). The percentage of instruction provided fully online by Mt SAC was relatively low before this and that compounds our challenges.

But we also have superlative resources: Mt. SAC's investment in student support services, our broad and deep IT capacity, and our cultivation of a deeply collegial campus culture provide us with resources that will

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benefit our students, who are even less prepared for this shift than we are. We have scrambled to meet demands on many fronts, but we are getting tools to the places they are most needed—we are not there yet but we will get there.

Academic Senate President Chisa Uyeki (who has been a superlative colleague and leader) has noted that we are not engaging in Distance Learning as Mt. SAC has understood those words: we are offering “temporary remote instruction”—we are reinventing ourselves on-the-fly to serve our students as best we can. But I know the Mountie faculty I’ve met won’t be content to provide students on-the-fly instruction. While the primary guidance should come from the Academic Senate Distance Learning Committee, the FCLT, POD, and other established campus resources, I make a few suggestions of my own [here](#). But whatever guidance you follow (and the best guidance will come from your own experienced colleagues), we all need to be doing our best and to accept that our understanding of what’s best will continue to evolve.

All of us will be better when this is over. Faculty will have found many new tools to supplement their excellent F2F teaching. Administrators will reinvent campus processes that will make them more nimble and responsive to faculty and students. The entire campus will have new appreciation for the crucial (and often under-recognized) service classified staff provide to students, directly and indirectly. We will see growth in our colleagues that we hadn’t imagined.

We have already suffered the loss of plans we’d made to improve. Our fall FLEX speaker, Frank Harris had to postpone his return to the campus; the Research folks prepared *The Power of Our Data* only to have it cancelled the day before; “Puttin’ on the Hits” is postponed to the fall; we’d planned a Guided Pathways event with San Francisco State Professor Kimberly Tanner, followed by a faculty retreat in Temecula—those events have been cancelled for now; Mt. SAC’s first Womxn’s Conference will have to be re-planned; the Hilmer Lodge Stadium dedication and the Mt. SAC Relays were to come home, but not yet, it appears; The Kepler Lecture may miss a year; Farm Day will have a break; the Scholarship Awards and Commencement will happen, but we don’t yet quite know how.

But we have not given up. Every college supports a variety of initiatives intended to support student success more holistically—not in one department or division, but through initiatives that support *many* students: some are continuing, others new. Most faculty are aware of our work in Guided Pathways; we’d hoped to begin in earnest on a new Title V grant. We made much progress in the fall integrating projects formerly funded through BSI, SE & SSSP into (a new acronym!) SEAP. We will also begin writing our Accreditation Midterm Report, as well as being developing a new Strategic Plan. This work will continue, though on a timeline that always puts service to our students first.

We stand at a challenging moment, but we will get through this together. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, William Faulkner wrote, “I believe that man will not merely endure he will prevail.”

Or, in a different vocabulary, these words from Maya Angelou:

“Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.”

We have made it our mission to change lives through education. Nothing in the current challenges has shaken that commitment. We will rise and prevail *together*.