



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 14, 2020

Dear UNE Community,

Over the past month, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed almost every aspect of life at UNE. And you have shown remarkable flexibility and adaptability in adjusting to remote teaching and learning. I thank you for pulling together and making this transition go as smoothly as possible under the circumstances. From the professors, who quickly identified, explored, and adopted new instructional technologies, to the members of the professional staff, who seamlessly reimagined how they might stay closely connected to our students as they continue to engage them, you have demonstrated, yet again, what a remarkable group of professionals you are.

Now, as we enter the final weeks of the spring semester with the course of the pandemic still uncertain, we must turn our attention to planning for the various contingencies we may face in the fall. Toward that end, tomorrow, April 15, **I will charge an Ad Hoc Committee on Contingency Planning for AY 21.**

Our colleagues on the committee will work to bring as much insight as possible to a number of specific questions related to how we may best fulfill our educational mission under various future scenarios. They will make recommendations, accordingly, to Provost Hamilton, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration Trufant, and me. Members of the committee include John Tumiel (Chair), Stine Brown, Mike Sheldon, Dennis Leighton, Jen DeBurro, Marc Ebenfield, Paul Berkner, Jane Carreiro, Karen Pardue, Jonathan Millen, Alan Thibeault, Sarah Delage, Matthew Kogut, Paul Henderson, Denise Dion Goodwin, Jeff Crocker, Erin Krummell, Heather Davis, and Darcy Flaherty.

At this time, we can envision two possible scenarios (with variations of each) for the fall 2020 semester. The committee's first task will be to flesh out what life at UNE might look like under each scenario.

In the first scenario, the virus outbreak has been contained to the extent that colleges and universities are able to safely welcome students back to their campuses. Given that a vaccine is not predicted to be available by the beginning of the fall term, in this event we would need to have plans in place for dealing with cases of infection that arise on campus. We would also need to have plans in place to adhere to whatever social distancing recommendations remain in effect pertaining to large gatherings, athletic events, public dining areas, and so on.

In the second scenario, the virus has not been contained to the degree that we are able to resume delivery of in-person classes. In this event, we would need to begin the fall semester providing on-line instruction, implementing whatever best practices have emerged during the transition this spring, while also planning for an eventual migration back to campus either later in the fall or in spring of 2021. In the interim, we would face real challenges when it comes to assimilating new students into our campus communities, meeting the needs of students in programs requiring hands-on learning as critical components of their curriculum, maintaining the momentum of our global education programs, and so on. This scenario is obviously not what we are hoping for, but we would be remiss not to plan for this contingency.

These are not small challenges to confront. And so many of the variables that will determine what the educational landscape actually looks like in the fall remain unknown at this time. I will therefore ask the committee to share its initial findings and make initial recommendations by May 31, with the understanding that these will almost certainly evolve over time as the fall landscape comes into clearer focus.

Please know that we remain as committed as ever to delivering a high-quality education to the young people whose learning is entrusted to our care. Our institution is known for being innovative, scrappy, agile, and nimble, and these qualities will continue to serve us well during whatever transition period lies between now and our return to something more closely resembling our normal way of life.

As the committee engages in its important work in the coming weeks, its members may reach out to you for your insight and perspective. I know that you will support their work in whatever ways you can.

Thank you again for all you do to make UNE the amazing institution it is. Together, we will navigate through this challenging time and emerge as an even stronger, more resilient, and more tightly-knit community on the other side.

Sincerely,

James D. Herbert
President