



“Our Finest Hour” July 20th, 2020

Good afternoon, COE:

Attached [here](#) is the MSU Mask Policy that goes into effect when it is officially released tomorrow morning. The deans received the policy at 2:00 PM this afternoon.

Our College Meeting for all COE faculty and staff will be held via Zoom webinar from 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM on Friday, August 14, 2020. The COE department heads will join me to introduce new faculty and discuss the fall 2020 semester. Provost Einhellig and President Smart will be in attendance and address the college. More information will be included in this week’s Post, and I will have the agenda finalized before month’s end.

The focus of our College Meeting will be on providing high quality course work while managing the pandemic. We will discuss a variety of scenarios and options on a class by class, building by building basis. For example, if a student in a small seminar room with ten other students sitting around a table should become ill and test positive for COVID-19, should not the class implement its contingency plan for at least two weeks until the environment is again healthy? If a class of 40 students in Hill Hall 001 are social distanced during instruction and one person becomes ill, could it not be possible to provide on-line instruction for the ill student while continuing instruction in Hill 001 with the other 39 students? These are the types of situations we will review on August 14th. We will also discuss protocols for students, instructors, departments, and colleges.

During Academic Leadership Council this afternoon, the deans discussed contingency plans at all levels. It is imperative that every class has an effective contingency plan in each syllabus for the fall 2020 semester. This will enable academic departments to support contingencies and formulate department-level plans. I will discuss this with COE department heads tomorrow morning at 8:00 AM. They will, in turn, share departmental plan during the College Meeting.

As I discussed in last week’s “Our Finest Hour” (which was more like a “Veggie Tale”), environmental conditions impact our work. While we have no control over some of these, we do, in fact, have control over others. We will need to be diligent, persistent, careful, and flexible this fall if the pandemic continues to trend in a negative direction as it is currently doing. We need to practice and model safe social interactions. We need to compel our students to practice and model safe social interactions, as well. Albeit awkward, this is an opportunity.

I appreciate you all very much. I care about you, your families, your students, our college and our University. “We shall overcome.”

Keep calm and stay safe,

David