



“Our Finest Hour” October 23, 2020

Bring your flowers inside today, gang; the temps are dropping. Grandkids picked sunflower heads last weekend, so we will be harvesting seeds, soaking them in salt water, and roasting this weekend. Found a nifty way to actually preserve the brilliant red, yellow, violet, and orange leaves now on the ground. Will give that a try Sunday afternoon.

While we continue to manage the pandemic across campus, each case is a major cause for alarm, and “spikes” persist throughout the country. I trust you are all following guidelines and encouraging students to do likewise. We need everyone to stay safe and finish the semester strong.

I say this even now, as you have learned from President Smart that we lost a dear friend and co-worker, Jason Rhea. Jason was our assistant director of facilities management. He worked closely with us in COE on countless projects, and losing him to the COVID-19 pandemic hits all of us here in the Dean’s Office especially hard. Rose, Sharon, and I will be reaching out to Jason’s family and offering condolences on behalf of the College of Education.

The pandemic is a most important reminder to all of the value and worth of every single individual. We all have professional and personal roles to fill. We must all look out for one another, and we should always treat one another with kindness and respect.

Two major decisions impacting our University community will be made next week: (1) On Monday, after two weeks’ of discussion across various groups, Administrative Council will decide whether to hold three or four commencement exercises in December. Last week’s two commencement ceremonies went extremely well, btw. (2) On Wednesday, the COVID Executive Team will decide whether to stick to the academic calendar as is through the end of the spring 2021 semester, or recommend modifications. As we have been saying since last March, however, changes in environmental conditions will necessarily determine future directions. Please let me know if you have any suggestions with regard to the academic calendar.

A major decision impacting the College of Education will also be announced next week. Provost Einhellig has completed interviews with the handful of folk who applied for the interim dean position. He will announce his selection on Monday. I will then begin working with that individual over the next 100 days to ensure a smooth transition is achieved.

I want to say in advance of next Monday's announcement how delighted I am that so many individuals stepped forward. When an organization is healthy, many seek advancement within. Whenever an organization is struggling, it is difficult to compel individuals to step up. Again, I am gratified to learn of the level of interest in the interim dean position. Nicely done, all.

Keep Calm and Prepare to Support New Leadership,

David