

Tuesday April 14, 2020

Greetings from Montezuma,

At UWC, we talk a lot about resilience. And we hold out for ourselves the possibility that we just might be not only dreamers, not only doers, but “dreamers who do.”



COVID-19 has challenged us to dig deep into our own resilience, to act based on choices we hadn't imagined, let alone dreamed of, before. There has been much speculation in the United States media about how we “restart the economy” or “open up the country.” No one, of course, knows exactly what either will entail or when exactly either will happen. We in Montezuma are living with the same uncertainty about exactly what next year at UWC-USA will look like, and exactly how and when it will start. But I can say this with confidence: We are committed to offering a

UWC-USA education in the 2020-2021 academic year. We will make sure that it is consistent with our mission and our values. And we will make sure that we are making decisions based on the facts as we know them, an inclusive process, and our long-standing commitment to a student-centric approach. In the face of so much uncertainty, I'm optimistic that together we'll be able to act with resilience and take this opportunity to prove ourselves worthy of being called “dreamers who do.”

Here are a few things that have happened in the past week and several that are on the immediate horizon:

- There have been no new cases of COVID-19 in San Miguel County; the count remains at one. We are following protocols to do our part in flattening the curve, making provisions for all employees who can work remotely to do so, tracking carefully the health of those entering our campus, and practicing social distancing on campus. A number of volunteers, including several from our wonderful staff, have provided cloth masks for us to wear while on campus! We are firmly focused on the health and safety of all employees, especially those whose jobs require them to be on campus.
- The UWC-USA board met last week. We discussed what we have accomplished in light of COVID-19, where we are now, and our outlook for the future -- including the parameters needed to model scenarios for what next year's UWC-USA education and experience will look like. All members of our community either have been or will be invited into our process to inform the decisions that will need to be taken by the UWC-USA board and leadership team.
- Even as we are focused on completing the 2019-2020 UWC-USA education and experience online for our students, we continue to help those staying with host families to travel home or move to different host families as travel restrictions lift and student needs change.

- We are also focused on the future of our students. The college counseling team is working one-on-one with second-year students as they review their admission and financial aid packages from universities in the United States and abroad. Students are discussing the options with their counselors and families to determine the right match -- our guiding principle now and in the future.
- The college counselors are also scheduling individual remote sessions with first-year students as they continue to prepare for college applications next fall. The counselors are keeping up-to-date with changes to the admission process for the Class of 2021 to properly advise students.
- Our admissions staff is busy accepting nominations for next year with 90 percent of our class filled and more students in the pipeline. We are grateful to the national committees and to the Global Selection Programme staff for bringing students forward during this challenging time.
- All students are working on their Experiential Education portfolios, with second-years competing for the coveted hammock prizes awarded for the top-rated portfolios. Some students (and alumni, like Hannah Freedman '12 featured in [this NYT article](#)) are taking time to participate in mutual aid efforts around the world including making masks or planting gardens.
- We are all learning how to fuse, balance and toggle between online and in-person experiences -- sharing virtual dorm hangout time, recording and sharing songs, and creating personal sustainability amidst very different conditions. Returning students are voting for next year's RAs, applying for ExEd leaderships, and will soon be engaged in online leadership training for second-year roles.
- In addition to next week's virtual information session for parents, we will host a session for newly admitted students (and their parents) who will begin at UWC-USA next year.
- In the facilities area, all employees are working across departments. Grounds, maintenance, and custodial staff are meeting the needs of our campus as the work demands. Custodians are painting in dorms, and grounds workers are tasked with interior maintenance and its commitment to UWC-USA at this challenging time.

We know that our students are resilient and determined to do their best, even if the dream of UWC-USA has taken a turn they didn't expect. I can say the same about our staff and the many volunteers, including our board and community partners, who are helping us to find a way forward. We are all being challenged. As dreamers who do, several members of our staff [created a page on our website](#) with resources to help navigate the unknowns we all face. The page was recently updated, and I hope you can find some resources on staying well. You can also suggest additional resources if you'd like.

I know many of you recently received our spring appeal in the mail. Looking ahead we know we'll need the help of all of our friends and supporters to meet the Davis Family Challenge Grant. I hope we can count on you. If you have not already done so, please consider [making a gift](#) to support our students and our important work with them.

With warm wishes for staying well,

Victoria
