

August 2019

Greetings from Montezuma.

The first-year students have arrived! They deserve the exclamation point. They have filled the place with enthusiasm and excitement, jumping in with both feet to all of the activities planned for them. I



know because I joined them for Dance Fun in the auditorium last night, where we were treated to Latinx, Afro-Caribbean, and Bollywood dance lessons led by students who were themselves first-years just last year. As a number of our second-years put it last night, “Can you believe we are really second-years, Victoria?” Indeed I can!

Our second-years deserve an exclamation point, too. During our post-grad week at the end of May, I met with them to debrief on the year and plan for their new leadership roles as second-years. We had a far-ranging and frank conversation--my favorite kind, never in short supply around here! The result, however, went beyond the conversation. A group of students took up my challenge to follow up with a written document, identifying the most important issues from a student perspective and making recommendations. I couldn't have been more proud to receive it! The document demonstrated thoughtful feedback and a spirit of partnership in strengthening our foundation, the strategy we will be pursuing over the next few years. Our students don't want our strategic plan implementation to be something that happens to them or to the students who come after them. They want it to be something that reflects a student legacy as well. This feels so right for who we aspire to be as a school, and I couldn't be more pleased. A few nights ago we invited the second-years who produced the document to pizza and conversation with the Strategic Leadership Team. What a wonderful evening it was, filled with gratitude and a lesson learned that proactive and thoughtful interventions can make for stronger communities when we work together. No “us and them” for us at UWC-USA. We are in it together.

Following their night of dance, our first- and second-years participated this morning in the Harvard Impact Study. They recognized their opportunity to have an impact on the movement for years to come by showing up and taking the survey. We challenged our students to get 100 percent participation, with the promise of an ice cream party at the president's house, their campus home. Stay tuned for a challenge from our students. We are still looking for at least 30 percent participation from our alumni, and we are only one third of the way there. You, too, can have an impact on the movement for years to come. Our current and future students hope you will! Here is the link for you to fill out the survey, which will take around 25 minutes.

One of the reasons that the students are having a spectacular start is because the staff was so energized by the reunions on campus earlier this month. To be honest, when our alumni, family, and friends left after the second reunion, we were exhausted. But we were also the beneficiaries of the energy that alumni brought to campus from all over the world. With just a few weeks to transition, we began onboarding an outstanding and incredibly diverse group of new faculty. We worked to finalize travel arrangements for students and made adjustments to the academic calendar. We completed

logistical planning for the first-year wilderness trips that are about to launch. We are now going full throttle, and it feels fantastic.

A great benefit of having time with so many alumni this summer (there were 296 reunion attendees over four reunion weekends!) was the opportunity to share the strategic plan with them and elicit feedback. While the plan was developed with significant input from last year's alumni survey and the focus groups that followed, getting feedback on the plan and on implementation was significant. Thanks to all who showed up to "Straight Talk" at reunion to learn and to share.

Finally, thank you, again, to all of the alumni who supported us this past year, who joined us for reunions, and who continue to advocate for us around the world. You are needed, and we are thankful for all of the ways you step up and lean in!

My very best,

Victoria

In all beginnings dwells a magic force,

For guarding us and helping us to live.

-- Hermann Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* (Magister Ludi)

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