

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

Greetings from Montezuma,

As we wind down the last few weeks of the 2019-2020 academic year, two things are crystal clear to me: First, I could not be more grateful to the entire UWC-USA community -- our students and families, our employees, our alumni, our volunteers and supporters -- for the way we continue to come together to make our response to this challenging time something we can be proud of. Second, it is time for all of us to pivot from responding and reacting to planning for the future. We need each one of you now more than ever! Or, to paraphrase Kurt Hann, this is the time for us to show up as "crew, not passengers." This is the time for all members of our school community to build the future that is only possible by our combined efforts.



At UWC-USA, our planning for the future has the great good fortune of being aligned with our values, across our UWC-USA community. With full awareness and consideration of the many unknowns all of our institutions face in light of the ongoing pandemic, our board of trustees has expressed unequivocally the importance of our working to open in the fall. To this end, we have set up a COVID-19 Task Force to make sure everything we do upholds our educational ideals, responds to the health challenges that will be with us for some time, and meets our financial commitments while stewarding our resources carefully.

The work of the Task Force builds on guidance from McKinsey and works on the 5 Rs that so many educational institutions have focused on since the pandemic hit: Resolve, Resiliency, Return, Reimagine, and Reform. In some ways, we've managed the first two R's as we RESOLVED to transition to an online learning model and showed the RESILIENCY it has taken to complete the academic year with students off campus. Our attention is now directed more closely on the three remaining R's. We are focused on how we can safely RETURN students to campus and to an educational model next year that reflects the UWC mission and values. We know that this will require us to REIMAGINE some aspects of our community and programming. And we are equally clear that the pandemic demands more substantive REFORMS that will require us to do business differently in the future. Our entire staff is engaged with the 5Rs, and we are actively encouraging suggestions and feedback as we make recommendations and plans. We have begun engaging our rising second-years in this work, too, but will do so more directly in the coming weeks.

Based on our board's direction, here are some important elements we are factoring as we plan for our reopening:

- We intend and are planning for our returning students to arrive on campus in August, with rising second-years staggering their arrival in advance of first-years. We are of course aware that we will need to be flexible as external factors become more clear closer to the time of arrival.
- COVID-19 testing and quarantine will need to be part of our "new normal." We are working with state and local agencies to that end. We will continue to address mental health and wellness as part of our overall health planning.
- We are pleased to live in New Mexico where Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham had previously served as our health secretary. Her leadership on COVID-19 testing and preparation was recently praised in [a piece in the New York Times](#). Still, while New Mexico has responded well and had a low infection rate, we know the pandemic will be with us globally for a long time and we are planning accordingly.
- Based on the many factors that will require flexibility in delivering our educational programming (including for example challenges procuring visas, potential travel delays for students, and regulations around the number of students who can be in classrooms), we continue to support

faculty in implementing asynchronous and live distance learning. We are also incorporating lessons learned over these past couple of months into our thinking about next year's learning environment.

- We will continue to send separate communications specific to parents of returning and new students and announce town hall sessions for both groups over the next few weeks. Even as our best intentions and planning will be affected by external factors beyond our control, so too our ability to create a UWC-USA experience in the time of COVID-19 will rely on families sending their children, and students partnering with employees to keep everyone safe once we are together on campus. We will continue to encourage both flexibility and communication among our students and families as well as our employees.
- We are committed to honoring all scholarship commitments for study next year.
- Today is #GivingTuesdayNow, and the response from alumni and friends of the school has been very encouraging. If you have not yet made a gift to support scholarships for our students and our efforts to work with and support our neighbors in Las Vegas, [please consider doing so now](#).

I hope this message again finds you well, wherever you are in the world. I especially wish you good fortune and great patience if you are among those beginning to take small steps under lifted isolation orders. We all dearly wish things "would just get back to normal." But we know, too, that we will all be responsible for a "new normal" that is respectful of one another and prioritizes our cooperation on behalf of the common good.

My inbox has been full of encouragement and well wishes from so many of you. Thank you so much for your support -- it means more than you'll ever know.

As we pivot to planning for our near- and medium-term future, these messages will now go out every other week. We ask your patience as we focus on the detailed planning it will take to give all of us confidence that we are ready for an unprecedented year. As long as we are all crew, not passengers, I know we can build that confidence together.

With resolve,

Victoria
