Dear Colleagues,

We first want to express our profound gratitude to all of you, and to our staff and administrative colleagues for the heroic efforts of our entire Grinnell College community as we have responded to the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The College response has been driven by dedication, professionalism, ingenuity, tireless, around-the-clock efforts, and a sincere commitment to everyone’s health and safety, protecting our vulnerable community members, and ensuring the successful fulfillment of our academic mission.

We are especially thankful to our colleagues in Student Affairs and Academic Advising, Dining Services, Facilities Management, Campus Safety and Security, Student Health and Wellness, the Institute for Global Engagement and the Office of International Student Affairs, Accessibility and Disability Services, the Center for Careers, Life, and Service, Financial Aid, Admission, Development and Alumni Relations, Conference Operations and Events, Human Resources, and Communications for their truly heroic efforts in helping our students depart campus under such difficult circumstances, and for continuing to assist students remaining in Grinnell, as well as those still trying to get home. We also want to note the thoughtful and engaged leadership of Heather Cox, associate director of emergency management, who has been coordinating our responses across the board. And of course, behind the scenes, all of our extraordinary staff in administrative and academic support, as well as those colleagues in ITS and CTLA who have been working hard as we work to keep the College functioning.

We also want to acknowledge the sacrifice by our faculty of these two weeks of spring break usually devoted to respite, to recharging before the final weeks of the semester, to catching up with family, and to finding time for the many tasks we defer in the hectic weeks leading up to spring break.

Thank you for the enormous efforts you all are devoting to the daunting task of moving your teaching to an on-line format; we appreciate the challenge facing us in the coming weeks. We want to thank you for your patience and collegiality with our colleagues in all the offices that support us as we transition to distance learning—particularly the ITS and CTLA teams. We will inevitably encounter a range of difficult issues as we make this transition, and we will welcome your comments and ideas as we continue to champion technological minimalism and simplicity as a driving principle of on-line pedagogy. In light of our students currently being in 50 states and 50 countries, we emphasize the need for asynchronous teaching as much as possible. Time in conversation will be more accessible for students in different time zones if it moves out of class sessions and into office hours.

The changing circumstances of the past several weeks have also called on our energies for the many people we care about (colleagues, students, community members) and those we care for (children, parents, friends, and neighbors). We hope that you are able to find time and care for them and yourself, and that the logistics of the work ahead soon give way to a meaningful—if radically altered—teaching experience for the last six weeks of the semester.
In addition to expressing our admiration for our community, this letter also serves to update you on the on-going efforts of several groups to equip and support faculty for the work ahead. Over the past two weeks, the **Emergency Operations Team** has been meeting twice daily to assess overall conditions at the College in coordination with state and local officials. The **Academic Continuity Team** has met daily to direct questions needing resolution to appropriate faculty governance bodies. Our thanks to Executive Council, the Committee on Academic Standing, and the Committee for the Support of Faculty Scholarship for holding meetings during spring break, and to the Personnel Committee and the Curriculum Committee for the work that they will be doing to not only support faculty but discern ways to relieve stress on certain deadline-driven processes. Last week, a **Well-Being and Resilience Group** began meeting, and we look forward to sharing their first efforts later this week.

On Thursday, we will gather virtually with department chairs, whose expertise and coordination have been invaluable in discerning the needs of departments as we continue to adapt to changing circumstances. They, along with your divisional representatives and Executive Council members, are key points of contact to ensure that we are listening and heeding the concerns and needs of the entire faculty. Sustained communications and a reliance on our governance structures will be key in moving forward, and we thank you for the many important questions you have brought forward.

Below we list those changes and flexibilities that, we hope, will most immediately benefit your work and well-being. We will welcome feedback and ideas for review by our faculty governance bodies to the new e-mail address **dean@grinnell.edu** as we continue to adapt to the challenges of this developing situation.

**Deadline Changes for Review and Tenure**

Questions regarding our policies on interim, complete, and tenure, and promotion reviews have been foremost in discussions, especially in terms of timelines. Executive Council met this week for a preliminary discussion about these and related issues, and we will be in close consultation with the Personnel Committee as we develop a coherent approach that will strive to ensure that those faculty who want to continue with current timelines are able to, and that those faculty whose teaching and research will be adversely affected are able to postpone review processes. The **upcoming April 1 deadline for providing the Dean’s Office with the names of external reviewers has been changed to April 15**. More details are forthcoming.

**End-of-Course Evaluations Alteration**

End-of-course evaluations will NOT be used in the Spring of 2020 for any review processes in future years. They will be administered only so that faculty may receive feedback from students on the whole of the semester. Our thanks to Executive Council for their discussion and decision on this matter.

The **Deadline for tenure-line proposals from departments and concentrations has been moved from April 1 to April 15**.

**Faculty Governance and FOC Committee Assignments**
The Faculty Organization Committee will be communicating separately regarding committee assignments in the coming years. Executive Council has been working with FOC in thinking about ways to achieve continuity in our committees and governance structures.

**Professional Development Funds for Book Purchases**
In light of recent changes to pedagogy and faculty research needs, the Committee for the Support of Faculty Scholarship (CSFS) has approved raising the cap to purchase books from $500 to $1,000 for this academic year. Please submit receipts to [Marcia Baker](mailto:Marcia.Baker@college.name).

**Special Topics Courses and Regularization**
For the Spring of 2020, the Dean provides a faculty-wide allowance that special topics courses may be taught a third time without going through the usual regularization requirements.

**Assistance with Distance Learning**
The CTLA now has two sites to support instructional continuity in distance learning:
- A [GrinnellShare](mailto:grinnellshare@college.name) site: dedicated to [Instructional Continuity](mailto:instructional_continuity@college.name) including
  - Strategies and tools
  - Training schedules and sign-ups
  - FERPA regulations and software considerations
- A public site: [Pedagogy for Instructional Continuity](mailto:pedagogy_instructional_continuity@college.name) that provides
  - Delineation of a student-focused, technologically minimalist approach
  - A growing list of faculty ideas and examples
  - Resources for students
  - A growing list of general and discipline-specific guides

**Using Applications Other Than Blackboard, WebEx**
Please keep in mind that we want to keep the technology as simple and streamlined as possible for our students, so that they are not themselves having to adapt to too many different platforms. **We thus encourage you to use these common platforms.** If you’d like to use different platforms, please submit an [ITS Service Ticket](mailto:its_service_ticket@college.name) so that your request can be reviewed.

**Access to Academic Buildings**
With a growing number of declared cases in Poweshiek County, we continue to do all we can for the health and safety of our community; consequently, the College will be enacting our contingency plan at the end of the day, Wednesday, March 25. As of 8 a.m. Thursday, March 26, P-card access will be limited to faculty and staff designated as critical to operations by their department chairs and supervisors respectively. Please read [Monday’s announcement](mailto:monday_announcement@college.name) for more details, including how to arrange for retrieval of materials after Wednesday. If these contingency plans make it difficult for you to teach, please contact members of Executive Council members and/or the associate deans in the Dean’s Office, and – with our thanks – they will begin to work on a solution with you.

Anne F. Harris, Dean of the College
Todd Armstrong, Chair of the Faculty