

Dear Colleagues,

We offer our continuing gratitude for all you are doing as we continue with classes this week, and we hope that things are going as well as can be expected. We are hearing a range of feedback, and we want to celebrate the successes, while consistently acknowledging that many of us may be experiencing difficulties and challenges as the entire community acclimates to Grinnell College on-line. We appreciate the questions and concerns expressed and will be working with campus partners to address them moving forward. We will continue to ask for your understanding, as the situation continues to present challenges.

As part of today's Academic Continuity message, we seek to provide responses to questions and concerns that have arisen as classes have commenced, as well as share with you decisions made by faculty and staff groups and committees that support the work of Spring 2020.

Challenges in Teaching and Working from Home While Parenting

While we acknowledged in an earlier e-mail the challenges facing those of our community who are caregivers, we want to reach out in particular to the members of our community who are parents. We have received pleas for support from our colleagues who are suddenly faced with the incredibly difficult task of working while parenting at home--with all that this entails, whether that is taking care of infants and preschool children, or working with K-12 children as they continue their learning at home. Our colleagues from across the College face this daunting situation, and we are committed to trying to find ways to support the many parents in our community.

If you find yourself in this situation, please know that you can reach out to your department chair and supervisor to begin problem-solving and finding solutions for this period. The institutional commitment to the health and safety of campus and community also includes wellness, and each of you knows your situation best – please share ideas and concerns with your department chairs and supervisors, and they in turn will discuss them with the Dean's Office and HR. Our core institutional mission remains the care and education of our students – whatever we can do together to focus on it (fewer meetings, simpler processes, and more) will benefit us all.

In terms of committee work, we also think it would be wise to practice what we might call “service minimalism.” While some committees by necessity will continue to meet, others may be able to scale back their work this semester as a response to

the pandemic. We should also practice care and forethought when scheduling meetings. While for some it may seem relatively easy to meet virtually throughout the day, for others this may be particularly challenging. Please let us know of other ideas to streamline and minimize extra work, or work that can be safely postponed as we endure the pandemic.

Let us take this moment to practice what we are preaching: we have scheduled a Faculty and Staff Friday for tomorrow to discuss faculty governance and decision-making during the pandemic, and a faculty meeting for this coming Monday will be held at its regularly scheduled time. We do so to respond to expressed need, but we want to emphasize in no uncertain terms: if attending these meetings adds to the pressures you are experiencing, **please do not feel obligated to attend**. We will work to ensure that meetings are recorded, in the event you want to receive the information presented (much of which will be reiterated in our communications).

Resetting Tenure and Review Timelines

Executive Council met with the Personnel Committee on Wednesday and has unanimously approved to set back all review processes by one year. We will be working through what this means for individual faculty members in the midst of review processes but thought it important that our community be informed about this decision immediately, in order to provide some alleviation of the anxiety faculty may be experiencing in this regard. An opt-out policy for those colleagues who wish to retain their current timeline is being worked out, and more information will follow.

Course Workload for Students/Workload for Faculty and Staff

As we receive feedback from students, it is becoming ever more crucial that we consider the many challenges facing our students as they contend with a range of challenges beyond their control—including limited internet access, difficult home situations, quarantine situations as students return to home countries, a loss of campus community, and the necessity of learning multiple new platforms as they engage in distance-learning. To provide you with one vivid example that was brought to our attention, a student was being asked to use ten different approaches to on-line learning for her four classes. As the pandemic and its toll intensify in the coming weeks, we will need to continue distilling our classes within the goal of course completion.

We ask you to consider these challenges as we continue in the coming weeks. Alternatives to synchronous teaching are essential as we adapt to the changing

landscape. A willingness to change will be appreciated and at times needed as we get a better sense of what our students are capable of—and what we ourselves are able to do – as students and faculty alike encounter unforeseen difficulties. Our special S/D/F option is one strategy we are encouraging our students to take; scaling back our own expectations—of students, and ourselves is another. At any given moment, any and all of us can be overwhelmed by this situation, and the need to be compassionate and generous with students, with each other, and with ourselves is essential.

Access to Courses

The need for alternatives to synchronous meetings also continues for students who may have difficulties with Internet access or other issues where they are. We encourage you to embrace technological minimalism to reduce everyone's stress, and to consider the risk to your and your students' systems and course materials if you are using software that has not been supported by ITS.

Message Archive

Academic continuity messages to [faculty/staff](#) and to [students](#) are being archived on the Keep Teaching and Learning @ Grinnell site.

WiFi Hotspots

Approximately 60 cellular hotspots have been provided to students with high need and who don't have Internet access. Activation of these devices began Monday; the last of them will be activated today.

We thank you, colleagues, for everything you are doing and managing. We also thank you for your communication with us and your Staff and Executive Council representatives and the Associate Deans as we all pull together to make things work and fulfill our mission. Teaching, learning, working, parenting, care-giving and – some days – simply *being* in a global pandemic is very difficult. We will hold that acknowledgement together and sometimes for each other, as we continue to find ways to support each other in getting through this historic time.

In admiration,

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