

Dear Colleagues,

As planning for the College's many futures, both immediate and longer-term, continues, I welcome the opportunity to thank you for your deeply meaningful collective work for our students this spring, and for the confidence that that collective work can instill in us for the challenges ahead. I also look forward to the forums that are scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday of next week when we will be able to provide updates about planning for academic year 2020-21. Further information about these forums is in the message that you received earlier today and Webex meeting details will follow. We hope that you can attend; please know that the forums will be recorded as well.

1) Congratulations on the Continuity and Completion of Spring 2020

Thank you for your tremendous efforts teaching, advising, and communicating with our students this spring during the disruption to teaching and learning that our community endured. Your capacity for creativity and flexibility in your work with students and with the support offices on campus such as Academic Advising, along with the revised policy deadlines for S/D/F, incompletes, and course withdrawals proved very beneficial to meet our goals of course continuity and degree completion.

With thanks to the Office of the Registrar, and the Office of Academic Advising for this report, and for their tremendous coordination of support of students, faculty, and staff, I share some outcomes of academic continuity from the spring semester:

- Of 7,839 individual section registrations this spring, about 20% were switched to S/D/F.
- In order to finish up classes, a number of students sought and were granted extra time: incomplete requests saw a 258% increase over the average, which are allowing students the possibility to finish — rather than withdraw from — a class.
- There was a 30% increase in the five-year average of spring course withdrawals (176); however, this increase is not drastic compared to spikes in past semesters.
- About the same number of students as usual, 12, requested an emergency/medical leave of absence this spring semester. Of these, four were for health-related reasons and eight were students negatively affected by the crisis to the degree that they were unable to complete their studies. We will continue to work with all students to sustain their academic goals.

These numbers are a powerful testament to everyone's — faculty and staff — hard work and collaboration to help our wonderful students maintain academic continuity (and more) this spring. Just incredible. Thank you — on behalf of our students and their families.

2) Digest of Pieces Related To AY 2020-21 Planning

We are all reading, connecting, thinking, and planning as we learn — from our many different perspectives and experiences — how to live and work within a pandemic. If you wish for a steadfast source of daily updates, I suggest the stories gathered every morning in *Inside Higher Ed* (you can register for their free newsletter [here](#)). I have pulled a few pieces from the very varied realms that come together from different publications in this learning curve: public health, institutional positions, pedagogy and teaching, and broad thinking and experience. We welcome articles and research that you find productive to the work ahead.

- [CDC Considerations](#) for Institutes of Higher Education
- [American College Health Association Considerations](#) for Reopening
- [NCAA Core Principles](#) of Resocialization of Collegiate Sport
- [Cathy Davidson](#) — single most essential element essay
- [Arundhati Roy](#) — the pandemic is a portal essay

- [S&B report](#) on inspiring Grinnell students

3) Kudos to GCIEL

Congratulations to David Neville, Vanessa Preast, Sarah Purcell, Damian Kelty-Stephen, Tim Arner, Justin Thomas, and Christopher French on the publication of their paper, "[Using Virtual Reality to Expand Teaching and Research in the Liberal Arts](#)," in *The Journal of Interactive Technology & Pedagogy*, Issue 17. In it they explain their work with the Grinnell College Immersive Experiences Lab and how they've helped students "develop the metacognitive skills, technical training, and problem-solving strategies that will make them competitive candidates in a global twenty-first-century marketplace."

4) Public Website About How Grinnell Is Meeting the Challenge

We have transitioned our Coronavirus COVID-19 Response website, which focused on spring 2020 and getting students home, to a site that focuses on our plans for the academic year 2020–21. The location is the same, but the name has changed to [COVID 19: Meeting the Challenge](#).

I wish you well for Memorial Day and a safe and happy weekend.

With admiration and gratitude,

Anne F. Harris, Dean of the College