March 5, 2021 – Campuswide email

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

I begin this week’s update with a reminder about the ongoing health warnings related to the pandemic. While there is much good news about our headway in defeating COVID-19, the reality is that we are not yet done with this battle. In particular, the CDC has just this week offered several dire warnings that dangerous variants have the potential to undo our progress. As such, I cannot emphasize enough the vital importance that we adhere to the spirit and letter of the social contract to assure the successful completion of our in-person living and learning this spring semester.

I say this in part because we now have six active COVID cases among our students, and we have heard reports that people are recently acting in a more relaxed manner in the face of this deadly disease. Particularly in key gathering places like the Grace Doherty Library, we must be especially vigilant to avoid viral spread. Masking, distancing, and frequent handwashing remain among our best defenses.

Since Kentucky has opened up vaccination to all of us in Phase 1C, I’ve been pleased to hear that a good number of faculty and staff have received their first dose of the vaccine this past week. This means that by the end of March we will have an added level of security. This will still not mean, however, that we can back off of our commitment to one another to stay safe and healthy.

Warmer weather will also be our friend. It is a positive sign to see the tents back up across campus. More classes can resume meeting outside, and the availability of study spaces has increased as well. The reopening of Olin Hall has had an equally positive effect. The warmer weather, and changes in athletics visitor policies as announced by AD Brad Fields, will also offer opportunities to get outside for more events. The Happiness Committee will continue to plan more events to gather safely as well. I appreciate everyone who has been working hard to make our campus as engaged and lively as possible, considering the hazards of the pandemic.

The richness of opportunities also extend to the arts, and I invite everyone to take in special programming next week on Tuesday evening by the Harlem Quartet, the inaugural Grissom Artist-in-Residence, for a concert live-streamed from New York City.

Also, please mark your calendars for our next round of Zoom forums to share updates and foster dialogue. Note that conversations about our on-going strategic planning process will be woven
through many of these forums and will be the sole focus of the first forums this month, which will include comments by our consultants at the Art & Science Group:

- Monday, March 15, 3 p.m., first of two combined faculty-staff Strategic Planning Zoom Forums, with Art & Science Group
- Tuesday, March 16, 3 p.m., second of two combined faculty-staff Strategic Planning Zoom Forums, with Art & Science Group
- Wednesday, March 17, 8 p.m., Student Zoom Forum
- Thursday, March 18, 6 p.m., Parent-Family Zoom Forum
- Wednesday, March 24, 4:15 p.m., Faculty Zoom Forum
- Thursday, March 25, 10 a.m., Staff Zoom Forum
- Still TBD, up to four “cross-over” Strategic Planning Zoom meetings, in successive weeks throughout the month of April

Look for email messages with additional information next week.

On strategic planning, I would also note that one of our seven pillars includes strengthening community connections to “increase Centre’s relevance and enhance the success of the community and region.” To this end, we are actively collaborating with Danville to partner as we can with its exciting new downtown masterplan to enrich the quality of life here in Danville and Boyle County. Centreworks will continue to play an integral part of this process, and I’m grateful to all the students, faculty, and staff who have already contributed to this important partnership.

I want to end by recognizing the ongoing concern on the part of our Centre community regarding the Confederate monument in the cemetery property of a neighboring church. We understand that the church has committed to the statue’s removal but is still working to identify the resources to do so. Consistent with our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, I support the church’s plan to remove the monument. We will continue to meet with the local church leadership to help them push forward their process of removing the monument. While we have no jurisdiction over the adjacent property, we are definitely aware of the painful impact this has on the well-being of our campus community. As this situation develops, I will report in a separate message on the progress.

Again, please be vigilant and stay on your guard against this virus to maintain our positive momentum forward. So much is at stake and only together can we be successful.

Sincerely,
Milton