

Good day, all. I hope each of you is well -- and safe -- on this Thursday.

It is ironic that, in this age of social distancing, I actually feel more connected to our South Texas community. Although I haven't had a face-to-face meeting in weeks, I have had more interaction with students, faculty, and staff in the past few weeks than normal -- albeit virtually.

I particularly want to acknowledge and thank the students who have reached out to me. Many have shared their experiences in this challenging time -- and I thank them for the trust they place in us when they share with this heartfelt, personal information. I commit to you that we will honor that trust and will continue to make decisions -- regarding grades, finals, and all of the other issues before us -- that we believe are best for **all** members of our community, including those who have borne a more substantial burden in the past few weeks. All of us -- faculty, staff, and administration -- are committed to our students and their current and future success.

One thing that has surprised me (although, in retrospect, I guess it shouldn't have) is how many messages I have received from students expressing appreciation for the faculty, staff, and administration who are working so hard to maintain as much normalcy as humanly possible amid the uncertainty. I have been honored to be part of this community and to witness so many individuals working tirelessly to ensure that our transition to online education is as smooth as feasible. In addition to the faculty (whom you see on a daily basis), there are countless unsung heroes across our (now virtual) campus who are working almost around the clock to keep our operations going. I think I receive as many emails from faculty and staffmembers from 8 p.m. to midnight as I do from 8 a.m. to noon! We know that the transition isn't perfect -- but it isn't for lack of trying!

And, finally, thank you to everyone in our community for your patience. We still don't have all of the answers to every question and every eventuality, but we will get there -- and soon. And, I commit to you that we will continue to make the decisions we believe will be best for all members of our community, including those who have been challenged the most.

On to the updates for today:

- 1. Due to Judge Hidalgo's Stay-at-Home Order, campus will remain closed through April 30.** We very much want to open campus up to students -- but the Judge's Order does not permit it. Judge Hidalgo has indicated that she may revise her order if circumstances allow -- and we will do so as well.
- 2. For Students Taking the Texas Bar Exam:** The Texas Supreme Court has created a committee to provide recommendations to the BLE and to the Supreme Court regarding the bar exam and licensure options for students who are scheduled to take the Texas Bar Exam this

summer. **I have been named to that committee, which meets for the first time tomorrow.** I am honored to have the opportunity to represent you, the deans of the ten Texas law schools, and law students across the state on this most important issue.

3. **Commencement:** We will be circulating a survey in the next few days to gather feedback from students on your preferences. Please watch for it. This is **your** commencement ceremony, and your voice matters.

4. **Finances:** In the next few days, we also will be sharing information regarding financial aid. First, an update on the CARES act and what it may mean for current students. Second, an update on options that exist for students who are facing emergency financial hardships. Please watch for it.

5. **Balance and normalcy:** Please know that South Texas is here to assist you. You have seen the emails from Dean Singleton. You know about the services that TLAP provides. You still can reach out to our CARE team at care@stcl.edu. And, I know that your professors have been reaching out to you, as well. These are, indeed, challenging days. But, we **will** persevere. We **will** support each other. And, we will meet the challenges ahead -- and we **will** overcome them. Be strong, South Texas!

In closing, I have particularly appreciated the many, many emails that I have received with words of encouragement and prayers -- as well as funny memes. Speaking of the last, if you haven't seen Samuel L. Jackson reading a poem on social distancing on Jimmy Kimmel the other night, you probably should. Warning: there is language involved (it is Samuel L. Jackson, after all...).

Stay safe, everyone!

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