Welcome to the weekend that marks the end of October and beginning of November. Whether on Zoom, passing briefly while picking up food at the Falcon, or in the halls of one of our academic buildings, it has been good to be together at Messiah this week. Enjoy the educator highlights and reflections as we look ahead to November and a designated season of Thanksgiving.

**Informational Updates**

- Despite the continued increase in COVID-19 cases across the state, the number of cases on campus remained stable and the last round of undergraduate student testing came back with no new positives.

- It is with sadness that we acknowledge the passing of three pillars of the Messiah community over the past several weeks. Combined, professors Gene Chase, Alden Long, and Bob Barrett served more than 122 years. Their commitment has no doubt left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of our campus community.

- Get your pizza, tacos, cupcakes here…SILP is currently in conversation with several campus groups who are seeking to bring food trucks to campus for students (and employees!) as club fundraisers. All vendors are vetted in advance and must commit to following COVID-19 protocols.

**Good News on Campus**

*Contributed by Assistant Provost, Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, Rob Pepper*

Over the past eight years, the School of Graduate Studies has grown from 320 students to over 900 students. We believe that this may be the year that we reach 1,000 graduate students! This growth has been the result of the good work of colleagues across the institution as we have added new programs, hired new faculty, implemented new policies and procedures, and launched new marketing and enrollment strategies. What a blessing it has been to work with a team of talented folks. An exciting part of this growth includes the intentional work to reach a more diverse group of students. As the programs have grown, the percent of students of color has outpaced the overall growth rate. Eight years ago we enrolled 20 graduate students of color (6% of the total population) and last year we enrolled 161 students of color (17% of the total population).

In response to the growth in the number of students of color, Graduate Council approved the formation of the Graduate Multicultural Student Organization (GMSO) in April of 2020. Due to COVID-19, the launch of this new organization was delayed. I am pleased to report that under the leadership of Allan Mathew, Director of Graduate Enrollment, the GMSO was launched in October of 2020. This organization will intentionally work to foster an environment of inclusion where students of color will thrive at Messiah University. At its regular gatherings (both face to face and virtually), the GMSO will be a space where students can find
support and belonging while they pursue their academic and personal goals. While meeting structures will likely vary, they will usually include a specific educational activity and/or a guest speaker who will highlight a specific area of support or resource of the University as well as a time for mutual support and networking.

The first virtual gathering was held over the lunch hour on October 20, 2020. Students and educators from several programs attended the session that featured Messiah’s own Marcelle Giovannetti, Assistant Professor of Counseling. Marcelle’s session, *Learning in the Shadow of Racial Inequity and Mental Health during COVID-19*, provided an overview of the challenges faced by graduate students of color, the impact of COVID-19 on communities of color (both mental and physical health), race-based trauma, and tips for coping with racial trauma and stress. Students were also provided some time to share their personal stories and were encouraged to consider the contrasting values of individualist and collective cultures and how those values shape their response to the current challenges they are facing. Students were appreciative of this space and left hungry for future opportunities to connect.

Future plans include opportunities for graduate students of color to support and mentor Messiah undergraduate students who are considering graduate studies. If you are interested in supporting and engaging with this initiative, please contact Allan Mathew at amathew@messiah.edu.

### Higher Education Highlights

- The *Christian Scholars Review* has launched the “*Christ Animated Learning*” blog, an interdisciplinary forum focused on the relationship of Christian faith with teaching and scholarship. Peruse the wide range of articles, including these two recent contributions by our own Jenell Paris and Janet Matanguihan.

- This week, Jerry Falwell Jr. sued Liberty University with claims that the institution damaged his reputation in public statements after he resigned. (Associated Press)

- The spring and summer were full of predictions about the impact of COVID-19 on higher education – many of them didn’t come to pass. Enjoy this *Chronicle article* that summarizes some main things we’ve learned so far. (Chronicle of Higher Education)

### Closing Thoughts

**Contributed by Provost Randy Basinger**

**The Courage to be Successful**

I have it on good authority that there was some wagering going on regarding how long we would manage to stay open this fall. (Presumably all in good fun without any actual exchange of money!) One thing this shows is that no one was actually sure what would happen this semester given all the uncertainties and contingencies of a global pandemic. We did not know whether we would make it to Thanksgiving, and since we aren’t there yet, whether we will is still an open question. We have been more successful than some (many?) had suspected or wagered. All of this has me thinking about what we mean by “success” and how it is achieved.

We desire to be successful as individuals and as a University; we hope that what we seek to achieve will be realized. Seeking success involves avoiding two pitfalls. On the one hand, we can easily succeed by setting meager goals that are easy to achieve. If we don’t expect much we won’t be disappointed. This approach to success only has the avoidance failure and disappointment as its goal. In this approach, claims of success ring hollow. On the other hand, we can be so demanding in what we hope to achieve that a lack of success is inevitable. This approach, despite its appearance, is not taking success seriously because success is precluded and replaced by inevitable failure.
It seems, then, as though a meaningful sense of success can only emerge when we find the middle ground where our failure is not inevitable while achieving our goal is not guaranteed. Opening up this fall certainly fits into this middle ground. Failure was not inevitable but it was also not guaranteed. And we all felt this existential tension (which made wagering meaningful, even if in jest).

What does it take to seek genuine success? I think Aristotle’s understanding of the virtue of courage might be of some help here. Aristotle understood courage as the finding the Golden Mean between two extremes – between the deficit of timidity or cowardness, on the one hand, and the excess of foolhardiness on the other. We can miss the golden mean of courage by a posture of undershooting or overshooting the target.

Few would argue that opening was an act of timidity. While others (those who wagered for an early pivot) might more plausibly have felt that opening was an act of foolhardiness. It seems to me that opening up in a pandemic with so many uncertainties was an instance of the Golden Mean – an act of courage. It avoided both the extremes of timidity and foolhardiness.

As we reflect on this semester, can we have a sense of genuine success? Given the above analysis, the answer I believe is yes. Moreover, this success was made possible by genuine courage. While courage cannot guarantee success, it opens the possibility – while not sufficient, it is necessary for success, properly construed. Individual and corporate courage this semester has brought us here, to the end of October, still in-person at Messiah.

Do you have something you’d like to see in the newsletter? We’d love to hear from you. Email provost@messiah.edu.