Week's-End Newsletter, November 20, 2020

Office of the Provost
Messiah University

Follow this and additional works at: https://mosaic.messiah.edu/weeksend

Part of the Higher Education Commons
Permanent URL: https://mosaic.messiah.edu/weeksend/6

Recommended Citation

Sharpening Intellect | Deepening Christian Faith | Inspiring Action

Messiah University is a Christian university of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society.
Informational Updates

- Updates from the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health were released this week related to travel and face coverings to mitigate the increase in COVID-19 cases across the state. Check out the blog update for information on what those updates mean for Messiah.

- While this week has again brought an increase in on-campus positives of COVID-19, the Engle Center staff and contact tracing team continue to care for students to ensure the health of the community, working with each impacted individual. Please continue to support their work with your words and actions: wear a mask, wash your hands, keep social distance.

- The Commonwealth is no longer keeping a list of “warned” states; instead, all out-of-state travel is subject to new mandates related to testing and quarantine. Please note that the daily health screening has been updated to reflect the changes in state policy. Additional details are available on the Messiah emergency blog.

Good News on Campus

Contributed by Dean of the School of Science, Engineering and Health, Angela Hare

Thank you to the 109 educators this semester who responded to the Fall 2020 Faculty Room Use Survey. Those who responded provided valuable information about our fall educational experience.

What went well in our classrooms? Educators reported that our Enhanced F2F framework, supported by the Zoom platform, allowed face-to-face and remote learners to participate in the learning community of a course section together. Lavalier microphones worked well, even with the challenge of masks, and the process of recording class sessions and uploading those to cloud storage for posting on Canvas was smooth and effective. Many educators wrote that the Canvas templates were helpful for course organization and that they enhanced their use of Canvas in ways that they wished they had learned semesters ago. ETS has provided training, equipping and troubleshooting with an attitude of patience and helpfulness since we began this journey in early summer.

What were the challenges? The biggest obstacle mentioned was that of audio quality, particularly the
The Office of the Provost and the Spring 2021 Room Scheduling Task Force will use the survey input to inform technological improvements and the room assignment algorithm for the spring semester.

The Enhanced F2F teaching model we adopted at Messiah, incorporating remote and face-to-face students, and some remote faculty, in the same course is perhaps the most challenging educational paradigm. As we approach the finish line of the semester, may our weariness be accompanied by the fulfillment of having risen to the task as a community of talent, creativity, and perseverance.

**Higher Education Highlights**

- We know about drive-thru Starbucks and Dunkin’ and drive up COVID testing. New to the scene: drive-thru college admissions and scholarships by Pennsylvania institution La Roche University called “Instant Decision Drive-Thru.” The process even includes a temporary acceptance certificate and a free T-shirt (of course).

- With record number of COVID-19 cases across the country, many colleges and universities, even those that planned to end the in-person semester prior to Thanksgiving, have ended in-person instruction early. (Inside Higher Ed).

- This NY Times map tracks the number of COVID-19 cases on college and university campuses around the country.

**Closing Thoughts**

*Contributed by Associate Provost, Alison Noble*

Have you noticed that apophasis, the practice of describing something by what it isn’t, has been the norm for descriptors of the era of COVID-19? What we are experiencing is “unprecedented,” “unparalleled,” “indescribable,” or one of so many more adjectives of apophasis. The times that we are in present us with so many new situations, questions, and decisions that it is challenging to know where exactly we are and what it is that we are experiencing. We know what it isn’t (this is not normal!), but we struggle to know and articulate what it is. Hopefully, that question is something that each of us (and the historians among us by professional discipline) will wrestle with and determine, but in hindsight. As we near the end of this semester, with just a few days of in-person classes left to go, I cannot describe this semester for what it was – at least not yet. But I can say this: I am grateful. I am thankful for the students – they showed up in a pandemic, wore masks, came to class, cleaned desks, and had the grace to say “thank you” to faculty and staff even amidst the challenges. I am grateful for colleagues and friends – they reached out to me and to one another with humor, a kind word, and we knew we were not alone (#TogetherAtMessiah, indeed!). I am thankful for all the administrators and staff who worked tirelessly to feed, equip, support, and lead throughout the fall. I am thankful for health care workers and scientists who treat the sick and research vaccines. I am grateful for sunrises and sunsets (I hope you saw at least one of the incredible sunsets this week), that meter our days, pandemic or no. And educators, the incredible educators of Messiah University – you came to campus with masks, lavalier microphones, laptops, hand sanitizer, Zoom queued up, and helpdesk on speed dial. What an incredible thing it is you have done, educating students, across the curriculum and co-curriculum, toward maturity of
intellect, character, and Christian faith in the midst of a pandemic. It isn’t easy (there I go again with the apophasis), but challenging and difficult times are when the world most needs graduates like the ones that come from our classrooms. Graduates who know what it is to be known, to be mentored, and who have seen that doing worthwhile things takes commitment, energy, and determination. They see you, know that they matter, and they experience the love that comes from God, through what you, the Messiah Community of Educators, have demonstrated to them this fall. And because of that, despite all the challenges and things that this semester wasn’t, I am indeed encouraged and grateful.

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