

April 1, 2020

Dear Unity College,

Working alongside our Senior Leadership team, I am continuing to closely monitor national and global progression of COVID-19. As new information emerges from the Maine CDC and the national projections of the disease trajectory become more refined, our planning has also evolved. Most recently, per executive order of Governor Mills, Maine has mandated termination of in-person instruction through May 1, 2020. I am writing today to inform you of the latest updates to our College procedures that will help to limit disease exposure among our employees and students.

In alignment with the state, **we will be extending our remote learning through May 10, 2020.** This means that our Flagship spring semester will be completed using remote teaching and learning techniques. Our faculty and staff have done a commendable job ensuring students have the supports in place to be successful in remote learning environments. You have moved mountains in the last several weeks and I am immensely grateful for your efforts. I know this is hard for some of us, so I hope you take solace in the words of Christopher Reeve *“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.”*

During this time period, employees with job duties suitable for remote work will also be encouraged to continue to work remotely. When on campus, we ask you to heed social distancing guidelines by maintaining a 6 ft. distance from other persons. Again, in compliance with the Governor’s executive order, we ask that all employees returning from out-of-state travel to self-quarantine for 14 days.

I fully understand that some of our students may be concerned about their remaining personal items in the residence halls. We hope to be able to resume normal travel and campus activity in May. Prior to that, Dean Phinney will reach out to students with the latest details on how to go about collecting their belongings. Until then be assured that the residence halls are secure and our Public Safety personnel continue to monitor our campus and its buildings.

Non-essential campus gatherings will continue to be limited to no more than 10 people. Of course, this means that some of our long-standing college gatherings such as Unity Works, the Fishbowl Seminar Series, Community Meeting, and other on-campus events will be put on pause for the time being. It also means that our annual celebration and recognition of exceptional student work, the Student

Conference originally scheduled for May 4th, will not be held in its traditional face-to-face format.

Perhaps most importantly of all, we reluctantly acknowledge that our **May 9th commencement ceremony must be postponed** until it is once again safe to gather in-person to recognize the hard work and achievements of our graduating class. Graduation is one of my favorite events at the College and it is a great disappointment to all of us to have to postpone the early May ceremony.

Plans for an alternate date later in the summer and a virtual recognition on May 9 are being drafted and more details **will be available this Friday, April 3rd** in order to best enable families, students, and employees to plan for the event. Take heart that when we reconvene for an in-person celebration, it will hold all of the pomp and festivity that customarily accompanies our commencement activities.

Those of you who have been attending our daily planning meetings are well aware of the time we have spent planning for different scenarios, the timely execution of newly drafted procedures and the thought and reflection invested in every decision. These actions are not taken lightly and are consistent with federal and state recommendations to slow the spread of COVID-19.

I am proud of our resilience as a College and hope that our work provides you with some small measure of comfort as we work together during this unprecedented time in recent human history. So I leave you with the words of Elizabeth Edwards *"Resilience is accepting your new reality, even if it's less good than the one you had before. You can fight it, you can do nothing but scream about what you've lost, or you can accept that and try to put together something that's good."*

In Unity,

Dr. Melik Peter Khoury
President, Unity College