



April 3, 2020

Dear Campus Community,

This present ordeal is teaching us a lot about hope. As students departed campus two weeks ago, we clung to the hope that we would regather in mid-April and finish the semester as it began. The senior class has remained hopeful that commencement exercises will occur on the scheduled date. And we are all looking with hope to a turning of the tide in the struggle against this menacing virus. Learning to manage our hopes with faithfulness and wisdom in response to God's unfolding providence requires enormous grace. It's been a life-long challenge for me.

We have come now to another milestone in managing our hopes. Given the President's extension of social distancing guidelines through the end of April and the PA Governor's business closure and stay-at-home orders, we cannot return to face-to-face classes on April 13. At this juncture, the most prudent decision is for our online learning efforts to continue for the remainder of the semester. The safety of our campus community is paramount. These circumstances will also necessitate the transitioning of our May intersession classes to an online format. Provost Frank will say more about that in the upcoming weeks.

This is a season of learning to adapt to the many unexpected and momentary changes in our lives. It's a blessing that we can do this, but the disappointments and difficulties that come with these changes are real. As we grieve the loss of our on-campus life together this semester, especially for our seniors, we can look with hopefulness towards the great day when our community is back in full swing.

This decision to maintain our distance-learning program for the rest of the semester raises at least three major questions. First, will we still have a commencement celebration on May 16? Second, will there be a prorated refund for room and board charges? And third, when may students return to campus to gather the rest of their belongings?

### **Commencement**

Until now, Board Chair David Rathburn and I thought the biggest decision we had to make was whether the weather would allow the baccalaureate and commencement events to be held outdoors. We're all learning a lot about perspective. At this time, predictions about the coronavirus spread lead us to conclude that a large gathering on May 16 would not be safe for the participants and the surrounding community. Also, it is likely that we will still be restricted by various social distancing directives six weeks from now as the COVID-19 wave moves across the country.

You're undoubtedly noticing that colleges and universities are announcing a variety of alternatives. Many are postponing and setting new dates they judge to be at a safe distance from this time of hardship. Some are scheduling an online event and another in-person gathering on a later date. I'm confident that our class of 2020 would deeply appreciate a meaningful opportunity of fellowship and celebration at a time that makes the most sense.

However, before we attempt to set a date for this special time together, it's important to hear from the senior class. Therefore, I've asked Mr. Hardesty and the Office of Student Life and Learning to survey seniors about various rescheduling options. He will notify seniors within the next two weeks about how



we will gather this input. Then, after consultation with the Board of Trustees, I hope to announce the new commencement plan as soon as possible.

### **Refunds**

On the subject of refunding charges, I must ask for your continued patience as we finalize our plans. I know many in our College family are struggling financially, and this matter could also have a major financial impact on the College. The recently passed federal stimulus package contains billions of dollars for higher education to help mitigate losses resulting from this crisis, including refunded charges. Our Board is committed, even in difficult times such as this, to hold fast to our long-standing and hard-fought principle of independence from unwarranted government intrusion, which means continuing to forgo considerable federal assistance.

In addition to our cherished independence as a faith-based school, we also value stewardship and community. This means we must be sure to honor our financial responsibilities to our students and families with a fair determination of the next steps. **Therefore, please expect further information on our refund plan during the week of April 13.**

### **Moving Out**

We will announce the arrangements for students to retrieve their belongings from their rooms as soon as PA state directives are lifted, and we determine it is safe to do so. Mr. Hardesty will provide further information on this schedule, and it should be noted that the Governor's orders are in place for at least the remainder of April. If students have urgent needs, they may contact Student Life at [Studentlife@gcc.edu](mailto:Studentlife@gcc.edu) for case-by-case consideration.

### **The Future of GCC**

Your support during this most trying and unprecedented experience is enormously appreciated. When Brenda and I departed Washington in 2014 to begin our new work at this special place as President and First Lady, we brought with us memories of stress-filled experiences involving terrorist prosecutions, a presidential impeachment and several other hard moments. Now we have another one to remember on a retirement rocking chair someday, Lord willing. Through it all, we've experienced God's steadfast love and gracious provision. Our faith was forged as students at Grove City College; we were equipped for what lay ahead. May God continue to sustain our College so that we may prepare generations of future students to stand firm in whatever challenges they face.

In His peace,

Paul J. McNulty  
*President*