

Friday, March 13, 2020

Dear Grady Students:

Today, as I worked on a million little coronavirus-related details, scurrying about from online contingency plans to business plans ensuring that our advisors have laptops, it suddenly struck me, hard: you aren't going to be here next week. In the swirl of a strange week at Grady, the enormity of that realization caught me by surprise.

You see, for academics, the calendar is an organizing device, a lodestar of sorts. I don't have to tell you all that we count down the weeks to Spring Break together, students and faculty looking forward to a weeklong respite from grading and deadlines. We long for break, though, because it's the alter ego of class. We take off to ready ourselves for what comes next – the tests, the projects, the newscasts, the rites of spring semester. So forgive me for feeling a bit adrift right now. I'm a dean with no students in the halls next week, and that feels, well, strange.

For you, though, it's even more strange. You're wondering what comes next, if we get back to in-person classes, if we don't...it's confusing and more than a bit surreal. Frightening, even. This much I know: the faculty and staff at Grady are preparing for what comes next, tirelessly, and the one overarching goal is to ensure that every last one of you gets what you need educationally from us. I've been humbled and moved by the dedication of faculty and staff, who have worked all week on plans and maintained their cool as we dealt with a new reality. I've talked to students and parents throughout the week, and every email, text and phone call has been gracious and thankful, marked by people going the extra mile to be flexible, to understand what all of us are going through, to share a little humanity with me. It's remarkable how tightly bound this community is, how people's first instinct is to help others.

It's the silver linings that really count in moments like these. As we all make it through the next couple of weeks, look for silver linings of your own. Help someone. Ask an older neighbor or relative if you can grab some groceries for them so they don't have to go themselves. Donate some of this newfound time at a food bank, a humane society, a homeless shelter, or anywhere that needs help. Read a great book. Shoot me an email. Take a long walk, preferably with a dog. Love your people fiercely.

Most of us, though, take good care of yourself and your loved ones. We'll be ready for you.

Best,

Dean Davis