

From: Brian Lenzmeier

Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2020 6:42 PM

To:

Subject: A note from the provost to the faculty...Coronavirus update #3.

Dear Faculty colleagues

I am writing to you in a follow-up to the email you just received about the decision to move all our classes to online formats for the remainder of the 2020 Spring semester. These certainly are extraordinary times in which we are living. We are all being impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic. We are all being asked to make sacrifices to protect ourselves, our children, our parents and grandparents, and our friends and neighbors.

Our students initially chose to come to Storm Lake because they sought out a residential campus experience with face to face and hands-on learning opportunities. They stayed at BVU because of the strong connections they have made with you, other faculty, coaches, staff, and the community. The decision to move online is going to be heartbreaking for many of them, especially our seniors. Now, more than ever, we need to be there for our students as they navigate a world that has been turned upside down in a matter of weeks. They came to us for wisdom and guidance and to prepare them for lifelong success. Many of them are going to look to you, their mentors, to provide the structure and support they need to get through these challenging times. Now is the time our students need us the most.

I understand the decision to move all classes to distance learning impacts you significantly. On top of all the things you are having to do yourself in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, you are now being asked to completely change gears and teach in a new format. No doubt, this creates anxiety and stress. I am hoping, however, that you can also view this as an opportunity to demonstrate to your students that you are committed to lifelong learning and are willing to leave your comfort zone to help *them* navigate the rest of the semester. We all know this is going to be a bumpy ride. You are not going to be able to address all the learning outcomes you planned to address. Technology will fail, probably on a daily basis. You are going to have to accept the limitations of what technology will allow you to do. Everyone is in the same situation. BVU is going to provide you with as much training and support as you need to navigate this transition. You will receive access to online teaching resources to support you in the coming days. You will have development opportunities that begin next week (via Zoom) and will continue throughout the semester. You will be given a lot of grace as we navigate this semester, the type of grace I know you will also extend to your students through these challenging times.

We all look to different sources for inspiration when faced with adversity. For me, I often look to the past for guidance on how others have navigated similar challenging times. As many of you know already, this is not the first time the Faculty of Buena Vista University has had to dramatically change course in the middle of a semester to address a crisis. On September 27, 1956, Buena Vista University's sole classroom building, Old Main, was struck by lightning and burned to the ground, leaving the college with no classrooms in which to teach. As written by William H. Cumberland in *The History of Buena Vista University*, "It was (President) John Fisher's finest hour. He could have surrendered to the despair he must have felt and temporarily suspended classes and even operations. Rather, he announced that classes would continue as usual." Faculty had to be creative. They held classes in local churches and cottages. They had to teach without chalkboards or normal classroom resources. Faculty and staff worked out of their homes. While we don't have the option of physical gathering spaces as they did in

1956, we have an online infrastructure we can leverage to meet our students where they are, even if they cannot be in the same room with us.

This is our 1956. I have faith in the faculty and in our students. We can do this! This can be *our* finest hour!

Sincerely,
Brian

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