

Subject: Gratitude, Shared Purpose, Solidarity and Compassion
Date: March 20, 2020 1:53:00 PM

Dear Sheridan Community,

As the week draws to a close, I'm writing to share some thoughts rather than to communicate operational updates. Of course, that work continues in good stead and everyone should stay attuned to our dedicated [website](#). There are, however, bigger and more important things that I'd like to address today.

Gratitude

First and foremost, I need to begin by expressing my heartfelt thanks. This week has not been easy for anyone. It has challenged our learners who were told a week ago that classes were being suspended to safeguard health and safety; I genuinely appreciate that this has caused stress, disappointment and anxiety.

It's been equally difficult for our faculty, who have been working tirelessly to re-tool their courses so that they can deliver learning outcomes with integrity via alternate formats. This is challenging, particularly for courses that rely on hands-on learning.

It has further demanded that our non-teaching staff rethink how they can deliver services to learners and keep the college healthy and functioning in the wake of ever-changing conditions and constraints.

All of us have had to pivot – repeatedly and on a moment's notice this week. I know it's exhausting and sometimes overwhelming. To every member of our community: thank you.

Shared Purpose

Notwithstanding that we're physically distanced, we are more connected and more united as a community of learners and educators.

Since joining Sheridan in 2016, I have often observed and commented on Sheridan's character. I'm so tremendously proud to lead here. As a community, we're resilient and courageous. We're mentally tough. We're fun and creative. And above all else – I love that we are caring.

In that context, I want to be honest and forthright in voicing what must be on all of our minds: What else is going to shut down or get taken away? What happens if someone I know and love

tests positive for COVID-19? And how much worse will things get before they get better?

Please know that we have added some important new resources to our landing page to address these concerns as best we can. Always, we take counsel from the Medical Officers of Health and relevant Ministries at both the provincial and federal level. As educated persons, we hope that you're relying on the same experts.

Solidarity

Our approach has always been to plan for the worst and to diligently, purposefully and calmly work toward achieving positive outcomes. Things are changing quickly but rest assured we're paying close attention. We have a solid pandemic response plan and dedicated leaders who are leading the charge. We're listening to – and talking with – the experts. We're digesting what we learn. And armed with evidence, we're tackling the challenges head on and – by necessity – acting fast.

There is now evidence of community transmission – with people testing positive who have not travelled outside of Canada and who have not been in contact with a person who has the virus. It's time, therefore, for all of us to take this threat seriously and act in the best interests of ourselves and our communities.

By physically distancing ourselves, self-isolating if/as directed and finding alternate means of learning and delivering service, we will keep everyone safe and reduce the burden on our healthcare system. This is particularly important given that we have no idea how long forced closures will be in effect. Remaining engaged in our core mission will keep all of us mentally well and ready for the recovery when it inevitably comes.

Compassion

It's so important now that you take care of yourself and your loved ones – please: check up on each other. Like me, you've probably seen videos of people singing to each other from their balconies. Simply sharing those helps to boost positivity and wellness. There are also many videos to help people stay intellectually challenged or physically fit. Lean in and engage if you can.

We're also now suddenly working and learning remotely, with technology that can be clunky or unreliable and without the benefit of seeing our colleagues whose energy and friendship fuels us. That's really hard. In these challenging times, I truly believe that kindness, compassion and good reasoned judgement are the path forward.

We are living through something that will appear in a history book one day. But please

remember, that this too shall pass. Thank you for your ongoing patience and understanding. By way of reminder, formal learning resumes on Monday. It will be different and bumpy at first, but still of the highest quality because that's Sheridan's hallmark.

Please: be patient and trust our faculty – they're the very best at what they do.

Warmly,

Janet Morrison
President and Vice Chancellor