



December 14, 2020

Dear Faculty and Staff:

As we wrap up the last week of remote learning, I know you join me in the anticipation of some rest and rejuvenation over the holiday break. Before we put a much needed bow on 2020, I want to thank each of you for your unprecedented dedication this past year. While there have been many days that have tested our resolve, I am optimistic for our future. Despite all of the challenges, we have witnessed many accomplishments and successes that make me confident we are poised for a prosperous 2021.

Academics:

- I'm inspired by conversations with many of our faculty who, despite teaching in semester format for the first time, persevered teaching new curriculum and learning it for themselves along the way. I'm grateful for the flexibility our faculty have demonstrated in learning new technology, new teaching formats and your continuous improvement mindset.
- I'm impressed by the diligence of our team in Experiential Education & Career Services who successfully placed more than 105 students in the fall and are on track to place 120 students for spring internship. This is remarkable given the reduction in employment opportunities globally.
- I'm appreciative of the commitment shown by our academic counselors, tutors and faculty advisors to work closely with students as they, too, adapted to new forms of service delivery.

Enrollment:

- I'm grateful for the efforts of our Admissions and Student Financial Services teams who worked diligently to recruit, admit and clear students. This fall, our new student enrollment exceeded projections (111%), our spring 2021 registrations and clearances are tracking well, and as of this week, 92% of returning students (fall 2020 to spring 2021) have already cleared financially, which is a strong indicator for retention. This team was also instrumental in distributing more than \$200,000 in North Carolina CARES funding to needy students.
- I'm optimistic heading into next year as our current pipeline of applications for fall 2021 is ahead of targets and up 12% over last year. More impressively, our Early Action applicants are up 23% over last year. This is a strong indicator of our ability to move into becoming a "Green Dot" institution as referenced in the August State of the Campus address.

Student Affairs:

- I'm amazed at the resilience and dedication of our employees who work in Residence Life, Student Involvement & Leadership and Conduct. Throughout the fall term, this team managed

the demands of more than 750 students living on campus with the added complexity of COVID testing, quarantines and self-isolations while offering 107 in-person and virtual events to keep our students engaged. Many from this team will remain on campus over the holiday break to provide limited services to approximately 50 students who will remain in emergency housing.

- I'm indebted to our teams in Health Services and Counseling Services who managed the physical and mental wellbeing of our students as ailments and anxiety levels were at an all-time high. Of the 144 COVID tests conducted on campus, we reported just 18 positive cases which is a 1.2% positivity rate. Our partnership with the Mecklenburg County Health Department tested another 244 individuals before leaving for Thanksgiving with 0 positive cases.
- I'm grateful to the work of our DEI committee and pleased to announce our commitment to participate in the Charlotte Racial Justice Consortium, which includes identifying six student ambassadors to join the work alongside our other higher education institutions.

Community Engagement:

- I'm thrilled to announce the return of our Epicurean Society and renewed support from philanthropists and community leaders. The fall virtual event was successful in securing more than \$25,000 and led to an additional \$63,000 grant from Brighthouse Financial, which will be used to reinvigorate our Honors Program and create a class of Brighthouse Fellows for fall 2021. These high achieving new students will participate in an Honors Living Learning Community, receive scholarships and preferred internships.
- I'm pleased that our relationship with Bank of America has resulted in continued support and flexibility to adapt our Summer Bridge program into a year-long program with increased funding for annual scholarships, programming and services. The bank has also approved a transfer of \$500,000 in endowed scholarships from the N. Miami campus to Charlotte.
- I'm impressed by the volume of donations we have provided to our community through the distribution of more than \$26,000 in breads, baked goods, produce and dry goods, which are the educational bi-products of our classrooms. These, along with other gifts, were provided to schools, foodbanks, churches and various nonprofit organizations in our community.
- I'm appreciative of our partnership with the DoubleTree Hotel who provided lodging discounts for JWU faculty and staff and accommodated our overflow housing for fall residential students. I'm also pleased to announce that the hotel was awarded a \$69,000 grant from the City of Charlotte's Hotel/Motel Accommodation Grant Program, which will offset losses to critical revenue.

Operations:

- I'm grateful for the diligence of our finance, facilities and operations teams who have been carefully monitoring our resources. Their work behind the scenes has led to lowered energy rates, improved WIFI access, and approval of a tax exemption for our parking deck and Lot B that will provide annual relief of \$164,000 in taxes and a cumulative savings of over \$650,000 through 2024. Close management of these resources allow us to be more efficient and reallocate resources to high need areas in these tight fiscal years.
- I'm excited to announce that we have received donations that will provide new office furnishings for Residence Life and Student Involvement & Leadership. Additionally, the closure of our

Denver and Miami campuses is providing us with kitchen equipment for our culinary labs, approximately \$60,000 of inventory for science labs, equipment and resources for media communications and the Library, and athletic uniforms. All of these recently arrived in three JWU branded vans that will become available for our athletics and student life programs. Additional inventory is expected to arrive in 2021 as the two campuses wind down operations.

In summary, we have much to be proud of this fall and we clearly have momentum as we head into the spring! We have demonstrated that together we can achieve amazing results, despite unusual circumstances and when we stand together as a JWU community, we can amplify this with external support.

As we head into the winter break and the December holidays, I hope everyone will give consideration to Chancellor Runey's challenge for all to make an [end-of-year gift](#) to the university. A donation of any size is an expression of support for the university's mission to help our students achieve a JWU education, particularly this year when we know many of our students and their families have struggled. These gifts make a difference in their lives and future dreams and further allow us to demonstrate the commitment of our JWU Charlotte family as we continue to seek external funding from alumni, philanthropists, and our business community.

Spring Return to Campus

When we return to work on January 4, most of our departments and offices will maintain a hybrid work schedule until classes begin the week of January 19. Please check [the H drive > Charlotte Campus Information > Charlotte Campus Weeks of Jan 4 and 11](#) to review hours of operation by department.

In addition to our fall COVID protocols, we will adopt several new practices for the spring semester.

COVID Testing

- JWU Charlotte will **require all returning students** (residential and commuters) to provide evidence of a negative COVID test conducted no longer than 72 hours prior to returning to campus in January. Students will receive a branded JWU wristband that will serve as evidence of compliance. Dean Perrell will be communicating a detailed schedule of expectations to students outlining dates and procedures for submitting tests later this week.
- SlowCOVIDNC remains our recommended app to assist with notifications of exposure. Please [download this app](#) if you haven't already done so.
- Daily health screenings will continue to be required for participation in classes and activities on campus and we will continue what's become now normal practices of wearing masks, physical distancing and frequent hand hygiene protocols.

Athletics:

- As a result of increased infection rates and testing requirements, we have made the difficult decision to postpone winter athletics, which impacts our men's and women's basketball teams. We are actively working with USCAA and Trudi Lacey, director of athletics, to evaluate scenarios

for acceptable return to play later in the spring semester. A decision has not yet been made for spring sports.

Important Spring Semester Dates:

- **Town Hall** to review current updates for campus operations will be held on January 13 at 11 a.m.
- **New students** will arrive on campus on January 14
- **Returning students** will be eligible to return beginning January 15
- **Classes begin** in hybrid delivery on January 19 along with pastry labs that regularly meet M-Th
- **Culinary labs** begin on January 20
- **Spring internships** will continue until the end of the semester, which concludes on May 4
- **Commencement** is scheduled for May 8. We are currently evaluating multiple options to recognize our graduates either virtually or through modified in-person ceremonies either indoors or outside. Decisions will be forthcoming after the first of the year for both the class of 2020 and 2021 graduates.

As we close the book on this chapter that many might title an “Undesirable 2020,” I hope you will find time to be grateful for many of the silver linings that have emerged as a result of the pandemic. We have discovered a new capacity for innovation and adaptability. We have uncovered new depths of resilience and persistence. We have developed new appreciation and compassion for others. We are stronger today than we were when 2020 began and I know this strength and determination will bring many more successes in 2021.

I wish you health, wellness and quality time with loved ones over the break. And as always, I am grateful for your commitment to JWU Charlotte.

Warmly,



Cheryl L. Richards, Ph.D.
President