Dear Faculty,

Spring is officially here! With five more weeks before finals, I wanted to share relevant updates so we can finish the spring semester strong. As noted in the most recent faculty/staff town hall, UND is preparing to return to a more normal fall semester with in-person activities including face-to-face classes. To assist you with your fall planning, please read the email carefully and let me know if you have questions or need support.

**Vaccinations:** COVID-19 vaccinations are now available for all faculty, staff, and students at UND and within our community. I encourage you to get the vaccine if you are eligible to do so. Students are highly encouraged, but not required, to get the vaccine.

- Johnson & Johnson (one shot) vaccination clinics will be available for students on campus (at Student Health Services) starting April 6. Communication about this opportunity was sent to students on Monday, April 5.
- Faculty and staff are eligible to get the vaccine a number of ways:
  - COVID-19 vaccines are available at the [Alerus Center through Grand Forks Public Health](https://altru.org). Log in to altru.org to schedule an appointment or call the COVID-19 hotline at 701.780.6358 to schedule a vaccination at the Alerus Center.
  - UND students, staff, and faculty members who live out of state are eligible to receive the vaccine in Grand Forks County. Call the COVID-19 hotline at 701.780.6358 for quicker access, especially if your primary residence is not in North Dakota.
  - [Transportation to the Alerus Center is available via Cities Area Transit.](https://www.castransit.com)
  - [Thrifty White Pharmacy also has COVID-19 vaccines available.](https://thriftywhitepharmacy.com)

**Spring Final Exams:** Just a reminder that all spring final exams should be offered online during the scheduled final exam time.

**May Commencement:** UND’s 2021 Spring General Commencement ceremony will be held virtually. In addition to the virtual ceremony, UND will host a special “Graduation Walk & Photo Op” for students (no family members) on Saturday, May 1, at the Chester Fritz Auditorium. If you would like to volunteer at the event, please contact your dean for more details. COVID-19 safety protocols will be followed.
**August Commencement:** August Commencement will be held in person at the Chester Fritz Auditorium on Friday, August 6. There will be two ceremonies split between graduate (in the morning) and undergraduate (in the afternoon) students. More details will be forthcoming. And, of course, if the COVID-19 situation changes, we may change course as appropriate given our priority on health and safety.

**Fall ’21 Course Instruction Modes:** Students can view the instruction mode for each fall class on our advising site. A description of each teaching mode (i.e., hybrid/blended, on campus face-to-face, online asynchronous, etc.) is also posted in the College Scheduler. If your course is listed as an on campus face-to-face course, students will be expected to attend in person with reasonable accommodations only for excused absences, as was the practice prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. If students want a remote attendance option, they should work with their advisor to register for courses listed as online or hybrid/blended. Please be sure to adhere to these instruction modes and double check that your courses are scheduled appropriately in Campus Connection.

**Fall ’21 Blackboard Course Sites:** To help our students be successful this fall 2021 semester, all fall term Blackboard course sites for students will open one week before classes begin Monday, Aug. 16, 2021. This will allow students sufficient time to preview, consider, understand, and prepare for how the faculty will address any COVID-19 necessitated modifications and ensure continuity of instruction in their classes. This is especially the case for courses listed with hybrid/blended instruction modes.

- Please post a welcome announcement and a description of how your course will be organized on the Blackboard course site when it opens for students on Aug. 16. The description should explain how you are structuring your course if listed as hybrid/blended and how students can expect to participate whether they choose to be on-campus or remote. Please work with your chairperson and dean to ensure your plans are consistent with university and college recommendations.
- We understand that many of you will still be working on your full syllabus and may not have all sections of your Blackboard course ready for student view by Aug. 16. You can restrict student view of specific course sections using these steps to manage course menu items.

**Student Financial Support:** We know that many students are in financial need. In addition to the Angel Fund which students can apply for, the Office of Student Finance has awarded $2,268,200 in emergency grant funding (Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund/HEERF II) to 2,830 currently enrolled students (undergraduate, graduate, law, and medical) as of March 30, 2021. The emergency grant application is open on the One-Stop Student Services website.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives:** There are a number of Academic Affairs DEI initiatives in progress or in planning. Visit the VPAA DEI webpage for more details. Of particular note, please consider nominating yourself or someone else (faculty or staff only) to serve as a college/school Inclusion Ambassador who will help train all search committees and provide consultation to the college on DEI-related initiatives. Training for Inclusion Ambassadors will be
offered the first week of June. To nominate yourself or a colleague, please complete the Qualtrics survey at https://und.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6V ZyWlG2E00eiOi. Nominations will be accepted until 5 p.m. on April 19, 2021.

University-Related Travel: The UND-related travel policy has been updated. International travel continues to be suspended until further notice. Domestic travel by car, flight, bus, or other mechanism is allowed and no longer requires approval by VP/CEO/Director. Faculty and staff will be required to obtain approval from their supervisor as is typical for the unit/department/division (via email or in written form). See the COVID-19 webpage for more travel guidelines.

Fall Enrollment Expectations: The University Admissions Office has continued to recruit new first-year students, transfer students, and graduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic even though many high schools and colleges in the state and across the nation were only offering remote classes and visits. The admissions team has welcomed prospective students and families to campus for our daily tours, Fall Open House, Admitted Student Day, and Transfer Student Day while following UND’s COVID-19 guidelines. We appreciate the collaboration of faculty and staff from schools and colleges who participated in these events. For Fall 2021, we have a slight increase in applications, admissions, and deposits for new first-year students compared to this time last year. We are currently in peak season to receive transfer applications, so it is a little too early to project their enrollment. There has been significant growth in online graduate applications. Because many of our online students are part-time, this doesn’t necessarily translate to large increases in student credit hours.

Budget Planning: While the North Dakota Legislature is still in session, another source of our budget is tuition. UND college deans have met to project student credit hours (SCH) for FY22 by student type, in collaboration with Admissions, the Provost’s office, and the Resource Planning & Allocation Team while considering historical enrollment trends. Overall, UND anticipates a continued trend of declining SCH of approximately 2% with some colleges predicting steeper SCH declines and a few predicting SCH growth. Based on these predictions and anticipated tuition increases, which must be approved by the Legislature, UND’s tuition revenue is anticipated to be flat for FY22. Of course, these are projections with many unknown and unpredictable factors, some of which are related to COVID-19.

Recruiting Students: One way you can help recruit students is to update our Program Finder pages. These pages are where prospective students often go to find more information about their degree program of interest. Marketing is conducting an annual Program Finder audit. Refer to the Program Finder Audit for details, best practices and things to watch for during the review process. Every page must be reviewed by the respective academic department/program/college by May 7, 2021. To ensure page accuracy, programs must work together to consolidate feedback and complete one form per program.

Computer Labs Device Usage Assessment: UIT is conducting an inventory of computer lab computers and their usage at UND. The usage assessment will be conducted for fall 2019 and fall 2020, and we will use fall 2019 usage numbers to determine need. UIT will contact the chair of the department computer labs if the devices need to be replaced due to being out of
warranty and/or if usage is extremely low. UIT will visit with the chair to discuss and understand the needs and make a recommendation before any final decisions are made.

**Technology Standards for Future Learning Spaces:** We are seeking faculty input on classroom technology needs. During late 2019 and early 2020, UIT was in the process of developing technology standards for our learning spaces. Now that COVID upended how we teach and learn, CIO Madhavi Marasinghe has engaged a consultant for the next three months to help assess UND’s technology standards for learning spaces and standardize technology across the university. The consultant, Sextent (NV5), is already developing audio/visual for the Nistler building. The Executive Steering Committee (ESC) consists of Liz Legerski (University Senate), Kaelen Reedy (Student Government), Jeff Holm (TTaDA/Online), Les Bjore (Facilities), and Madhavi Marasinghe (CIO). Sextent will conduct workshops with faculty and students to get feedback on their classroom technology needs. Each session will be limited to 10 individuals and be two hours in duration. Please let Dr. Liz Legerski know by April 9 if you are interested in participating. The workshops will be held on Wednesday, April 21. Your participation is appreciated.

**Task Force for the Future of Education at UND:** The Task Force for the Future of Education at UND has been meeting on average twice a week since the beginning of February 2021. During the first several weeks, learning sessions were organized and open to the public to gain insight into current and future higher education issues (recordings can be found on the Education Task Force website). The Task Force has recently begun discussing and developing recommendations for how education at UND should move forward, largely based on the learning sessions and other research material. They expect to wrap up the Task Force work by mid-April, and the two co-chairs plan to have a draft report by the end of this April.

It has been a year characterized by resilience and a commitment to students amidst significant hardship and challenges as a result of the pandemic. I appreciate how much time and effort you have expended and know your work has made a significant difference in students’ academic experiences. Thank you for all you have done and will continue to do to support students and one another.

Be well and stay safe,

Debbie Storrs  
Interim Provost