

March 18, 2020

To: Alumni and Friends  
From: President Gregory D. Hess  
Subject: Important Letter from Wabash College

To the alumni, parents, and friends of Wabash College,

As some of you may be aware, on Tuesday I made the exceptionally difficult decision to suspend in-person teaching and learning at Wabash for the remainder of the semester. Guided by recommendations from federal, state, and local public health authorities, as well as our own campus healthcare professionals, we were given no choice but to suspend our face-to-face tradition of liberal arts education.

Over our spring break last week, IT Services staff, led by Brad Weaver and Aaron Elam, worked diligently with our faculty to prepare them to conduct virtual classes using familiar and new technologies. The response was remarkable, and on Monday of this week, our virtual classrooms were in place. Our spirits have been lifted by the positive, whatever-it-takes attitude of everyone on campus, modeled so effectively by Dean of the College Scott Feller.

I want to emphasize that while our virtual classrooms are different, they spring from the very strong relationships our faculty and students built with one another in the first half of the semester. I assure you that our professors will hold our young men to very high standards — just as they do when teaching in person — and the quality of the virtual experience will be outstanding.

Most of our students have returned or are in the process of returning to their homes. Members of our Student Life staff, led by deans Gregory Redding, Marc Welch, and Heather Thrush, are working to help students retrieve their belongings, while moving some students who must remain on campus into new living units. For those young men who must stay on campus, we will provide academic support, as well as food and healthcare services, to the extent possible.

Across the College, we are practicing safe social distancing and personal hygiene, and enhancing the cleaning of our facilities. Many of our employees, particularly those who have identified risk factors, are working remotely when feasible. However, because we will continue to have some students on campus, we must provide support for them.

There are, of course, other follow-on implications for our College, including:

- In light of this public health emergency, Wabash is not enforcing the standard provisions in our housing agreements, and our Business Office employees must begin the process of calculating complicated credits or refunds for student housing and meals, all subject

to applicable state and federal financial aid regulations. This is intricate work being led by CFO Kendra Cooks and Financial Aid Director Alex DeLonis.

- All athletics competitions and other public events have been canceled for the remainder of the year. It was heart-wrenching to see our winter sports athletes ready to compete at national championship venues only to be denied the opportunity. Still, I am proud that our indoor track and field team captured the conference championship; the swimming and wrestling teams were honored for their academic performance; wrestler Kyle Hatch posted a 37-0 record; and basketball star Jack Davidson received Academic All-America honors for the second straight year.
- Amy Weir, who works with our international students and international immersion trips, and Allee Metcalf, who coordinates our travel, worked very long days over the last several weeks as we sent students abroad for spring break and then were forced to bring home our students who were on semester-long study abroad programs. They are also working closely with our international students to determine their best options going forward.
- Dean Chip Timmons and our Enrollment team are working creatively to engage prospective students, including involving them in our virtual classrooms and developing video content we would have delivered on our Admitted Student Weekends, which have been canceled. To date, our Admissions numbers remain strong and we look forward to ringing in the Class of 2024 in the fall.
- Our annual Day of Giving is typically held in April. As many of you know, Wabash has a best-in-class Annual Fund Day of Giving, which is critical to our overall fund-raising success and has a huge impact on our operating budget. Our staff, including deans Michelle Janssen and Joe Klen and Annual Giving Director Aaron Selby, are discussing all possible options so that we can still execute that important day for our Annual Fund – even if it must be postponed.
- Our Professional Development operation is up and running on virtual platforms. Led by Dean Steven Jones and Director of Career Services Roland Morin, our staff is in contact with students and employers, trying to secure interviews for full-time positions and internships for our young men.
- I am indebted to the professional expertise of our campus healthcare team, Drs. Scott Douglas and John Roberts, both of whom have private practices, our nurse, Chris Amidon, and our mental health counselors, Jamie Douglas and Laura Dolph. They have been in constant contact and have provided sound recommendations, which have informed our decision-making, all while caring for our students in need.

- We have begun planning for the possibility of significant changes to our annual May traditions, including Commencement, the Board of Trustees meeting, and the awarding of Honorary Degrees. We will make decisions on all of these important events and traditions on or around April 1, and we will decide whether or not to postpone June's Big Bash Reunion Weekend by April 15.

It has been gut-wrenching to watch this pandemic's attack on our health, economy, educational and religious institutions, and our way of life. I am particularly saddened that the men in the Class of 2020 will end their time at Wabash in this way. It is my pledge to honor those young men, celebrate their achievements, and ring them out as Wabash graduates. This will happen, even if it must be delayed.

All of us at the College have struggled mightily these last few weeks. Wabash exists solely for its students, and we are not the same in their absence. However, amidst all of the uncertainty in these unprecedented days and weeks, I am heartened by the fact that Wabash is a small, intimate, and caring community; that our alumni network is ranked number one in the nation; and that our parents and friends truly care about our inspiring mission. We've seen this come alive in recent days on social media: freshmen and sophomore students are paying tribute to their senior brothers; parents are bonding in difficult times and offering to assist others; and alumni are reaching out to students. There has been leadership and understanding across the Wabash nation, and I am honored to be a part of this very special community.

The College needs your ongoing support in every way possible in these hard times, so please continue to exemplify our mission: to think critically, act responsibly, lead effectively, and live humanely. As George Lewes Mackintosh, our president during the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic, once said, *"You are our exhibits; you are our epistles, known and read of all men. We are sending you out to represent Wabash College in the world."*

Indeed, our world needs the leadership and compassion of Wabash men, their families, and our friends now more than ever.

We will continue to provide updates on our College's response to COVID-19 on our website: <https://www.wabash.edu/studentlife/coronaviruswabash>

With best wishes for good health,

Gregory D. Hess  
President