



MADEIRA

A Message from the Dean of Faculty and Academics

Dear Madeira Students, Parents and Faculty,

As the second week of distance learning draws to an end, let's again take time for reflection and acknowledgment.

Acknowledgment first: the Madeira community is, under standard conditions, strong and caring. Under exceptional conditions, the community is not only strong in its girls and generous of spirit, but also resilient like the snail, agile as Dance Select, and steady in its pursuit of knowledge. A salute to the students who are learning about themselves as well as about their Mod 6 courses; to the faculty who are letting nothing, not even a pandemic, come between them and their teaching; and to the families who are supporting this suddenly more complex enterprise of education. It is humbling to be part of such a group.

Now reflection: through the survey feedback last week and your ongoing insights, we are learning where and how to adjust to enhance the learning process. Two weeks in, we have a better understanding of the golden ratio of individual work time and connected learning time. Both are needed, and we will continue to find ways to provide both effectively from subject to subject. We have heard from students and faculty that distance learning and teaching take enormous time and energy, and we are working to ensure the learning is enjoyable and the teaching is sustainable (and vice versa).

What has become clear even only after two weeks is that distance learning assumes a higher level of organizational skill on the part of the learner. In the long-run, this stretch will be beneficial, as I anticipate that by the end of mod 7 Madeira students will have a keener sense of themselves as learners, with new practice in using resources (teacher, classmates, advisor, learning specialist, family, me, etc.) and in managing their time. In the short-run, any student who knows her organizational skills are not yet her strength can use her resources actively and immediately. You don't have to go it alone. We are here to help you, and we want to help you. Reach out.

We have also learned, after only two weeks, that hard work is hard whether done in a classroom or from a distance. Reading a complicated text, thinking through a multi-step problem, writing an analytic paragraph, generating ideas — these are hard activities. They might feel even harder if not enlivened by a friend's quip or a teacher's smile. They might feel depleting if not broken up by a walk around the Oval or to the Student Center or Maynard

Quad. As a community, we have shown we can do hard things, and life currently demands that we continue to do hard things. So here's a reminder that self-compassion is a key part of the learning process (and the teaching process).

Hats off to an extraordinary community managing extraordinary times. As we move into week three, teachers will continue to seek feedback from their students in individual classes. I will continue to seek feedback from the department chairs and teachers. Families are asked to continue to share feedback directly with me. Hearing from each constituency will help us as we move forward through this mod and the next. An iconic Madeira faculty member and coach from decades past, Dr. Dottie Hayden, reminded me this week that it is not just, "Function in disaster and finish in style," but rather, "Function in disaster, finish in style, and keep calm at the center of your being." Words to live by in spring 2020.

Very best wishes to all,

M.A. Mahoney