Dear Students:

If there’s a silver lining to the current situation (however slight), it’s that when the pandemic passes, we all will have honed essential skills such as resilience, creative thinking, communication and teamwork in ways we never imagined possible just a few weeks ago. This month, a team of nearly 1,000 faculty and staff members are working to adapt, refine, rebuild and learn new ways to support you. Here are a few examples:

- Professors are identifying learning solutions that are appropriate to their class, and altering instruction styles and grading in ways that reflect students’ available resources. These changes will be communicated to you by your instructors as we restart the semester this week.

- Professors are maintaining regular contact with you in a host of new ways, including virtual office hours. We’re using technology to maintain a hallmark of our institution: personal attention.

- Registration for summer/fall courses opens this week and I encourage you to reach out to your faculty advisor, or to IRIS, for help in thinking about next semester’s courses.

- Academic support services have converted their operations to serve you online. Please use our new Virtual Resources website to connect with the library, tutoring, writing center, educational access services, and more. Like the faculty, our support staff in these areas have augmented the ways they can help you succeed.

- Student Showcase will not be a physical event, but faculty sponsors and students will be offered virtual options for presentation. You will hear more details from Dr. Aparna Palmer, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs/Student Success on this in the near future.

- As President Foster announced, we are creating both a virtual commencement ceremony in May as well as a live, more traditional, ceremony in August. Mr. Tim Pinnow, our Senior Vice President for Strategic Initiatives, will communicate additional details in the coming weeks. In the meantime, seniors should check their MAVzone email for a survey to select their preferred ceremony format.

- In many courses final exams will be altered in ways that make the schedule less rigid than in a typical semester, but you should maintain your availability according to the published finals schedule.

- If you are having access issues, please contact Student Services by email to StudentServices@coloradomesa.edu and we’ll work with you one-on-one to find solutions to connectivity, technology, basic software, etc.

- Finally, we are developing a grading option of “satisfactory/unsatisfactory” — more commonly known as “pass/fail” — and will be sharing details of that option with you later this week.

(continues)
For many of you, this is a different kind of learning environment than you've ever encountered, but I know you can do it. Check your e-mails and D2L course shells often, and don't be shy about asking questions. Keep a log of the ways you've adapted and become resilient in the face of adversity. Your future employers and colleagues will want to hear these stories. Feel free to reach out via email to khaas@coloradomesa.edu if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,
Kurt Haas, PhD
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Colorado Mesa University