

March 17, 2020

Dear New England College Colleagues:

I don't think I am overstating it to suggest that these are unprecedented times. Our community is about to enter a new frontier, a new mode of education at NEC, one driven by our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last several days, we have made numerous critical decisions that have a tangible impact on how we live, work, and interact with one another. We have allowed undergraduate students to remain in the residence halls if they wish, to keep basic services open (dining, facilities maintenance, campus safety, for example) and to require our faculty and staff members to work remotely for the next several weeks. These decisions were made after long hours of discussion, research, and conversations with our own internal constituencies, with other higher education leaders and state officials, and based upon decisions made at the national level. I believe our current policy is the best approach.

We do not know what awaits us next month, next week, or even tomorrow, but I am optimistic for the future and for our institution. On Friday, I met with faculty from both campuses to discuss our plan for moving students to the virtual/remote teaching and learning mode. The comments and questions were well-reasoned, constructive, and compassionate. During that meeting I was struck by the selfless tone of the conversation, and marveled that even in a highly stressful situation there was little emotion but rather serious problem-solving. It was just too important for any of us to be concerned with self. Such selflessness, such courage, is what makes NEC a great college. I was deeply touched. These are my heroes.

Our staff have been at the ready to help students as they make the decision to stay or return home. They are helping students adjust to the online environment, ensuring safety and correct social distancing, and responding to concerned parents and family members. They have worked endless hours to prepare for this transition without complaint. These are my heroes.

Our Senior Team has displayed equally touching courage in the face of this crisis. The VPs and I have been in meetings, on the phone, texting and emailing at all hours of the day, throughout the weekends, never failing to respond. This is courage. These are my heroes.

Fred Rogers said: "We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say, 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes." True words.

I have often said that if this were wartime, I'd want these NEC people in my platoon. Well, it is a kind of wartime, only the enemy is a virus. And I have never been prouder to be a part of this courageous community. We will fight this fight like we always have, and we will overcome this crisis.

I was thinking over the weekend about how NEC was founded. This college came into being to serve the veterans of the Second World War, it was founded by and for them. These veterans had experienced the horrors of the greatest war our world has known, but they returned victorious and looked to the future. They created this college with grit, determination, and an unflappable optimism.



Office of the President

98 Bridge Street
Henniker, NH 03242

That founding spirit lives on at New England College. Please know how much I admire your strength, your commitment, your optimism, and your professionalism. I have never been prouder to be president of this fine College. Let's fight our hardest fight together and win this war.

With deepest appreciation,

Michele Perkins, EdD
President