August 18, 2020

Dear Members of the UMass Boston Community,

The focus of this week’s letter from the Academic Continuity Task Force (ACTF) is engagement. As we continue to prepare for the unprecedented situation we face in this new academic year, this second-to-last letter from the ACTF highlights some ways that campus communications will be maintained going forward.

The third and final ACTF listening session is scheduled for Thursday, August 27, from 10-11:30 a.m. (details to follow). In the meantime, this is a last call to the campus community to share concerns, questions, input, and feedback with us via emails to ACTF@umb.edu, or contribute input anonymously through the ACTF form. These mechanisms will close on August 28.

Moving Forward with Engagement

In this week’s letter, we would like to focus on another facet of the official mission and values of our university: Engagement. UMass Boston is committed to teaching and service that contribute to the public good. As a campus community, we are obliged to participate in “basic, applied, and engaged research, to support the intellectual, scientific, cultural, artistic, social, political, and economic development of the communities we serve.” We are also under the obligation to “forge partnerships with communities, the private sector, government, health care organizations, other colleges and universities, and K-12 public education.” As a public institution of higher learning, we must therefore turn our attention to the needs both within and beyond our campus community. The extraordinary demands of the COVID-19 pandemic require that we respond to and provide for the broader health and wellness of our students, faculty, and staff and the communities in which they live. Our commitment to becoming a leading anti-racist and health promoting public institution necessitates holistic care for all members of our campus community, which has implications as
much for our research and teaching as it does for establishing supportive and mutually beneficial relationships with our surrounding communities.

**Instructors:** We laud the preparation of instructors who are learning and laboring to ready courses for equitable, just, and engaged remote instruction for their courses, as well as putting in place appropriately safe practices for face-to-face instruction (see last week’s ACTF letter for the list of courses with on-campus components).

**Staff:** We celebrate the hard work of staff who have welcomed new students, have continued supporting current students, and have prepared campus systems to provide ongoing and new support that will be critical in the semester ahead.

**Students:** We value the determination and resilience of the excellent students of UMass Boston who arrive with hope for the new academic year. Additionally, we are cognizant of and grateful for all of the students who are serving in leadership roles within our campus community. We enter the fall semester in awareness and appreciation of all of our students regardless of their backgrounds. We are committed to learning how to better honor and be respectful of the life-worlds and cultural diversity of our students. We recognize that many of our students and their families have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and that structural racism has made these impacts even more dramatic and acute in Black and Brown communities and communities of color. We therefore take seriously the fact that we as an institution can and will be here to support you through these very difficult times.

**Guidance for International Students**

**International Student and Scholar Services** (ISSS) within the UMass Boston Office of Global Programs provides immigration information and related resources for all international students and scholars. The entire campus is working diligently to ensure that we are structuring hybrid learning experiences that will meet the needs of international students. ISSS has developed [resources and FAQs](#) for students and scholars who are affected by Federal Executive Orders. Many across campus are also developing and implementing policies that will support the success at UMass Boston of both new and returning international students.

We are honored to be serving UMass Boston and look forward to keeping you engaged with our work as it transitions to the next phase. Please be well, safe, strong, and resolute as we navigate these unprecedented times together and strive to be, both in our planning and our practice, a just, equitable, and inclusive
community.

Sincerely,

Joseph B. Berger
Lillian-Yvonne Bertram
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