



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

Greetings,

I would like to wish everyone a joyous and productive beginning to the new year. Beginning this semester, I'll be sending a monthly message, updating the community on strategic initiatives and celebrating our achievements at Lewis. I'll also remind you about some things to look forward to in our community calendar, and offer some reflections on the state of higher education and its impact on Lewis.

Since we broke for the holidays, many exciting things have happened at Lewis, including strong athletic performances, notable faculty achievements, and a great deal of student travel and research. While there is no way I could touch on all of the individual achievements, I'd like to draw your attention to one. As you know, Lewis received a donation by American Airlines of an MD-80 aircraft in December. This week, we will formally celebrate the gift in a ceremony on Thursday, January 23 at 10:00 a.m. at the Harold E. White Aviation Center. Please join us for this event if you can. I'd like to recognize the hard work of the faculty and staff from Aviation and Transportation Studies—and our Advancement staff—for making this gift possible for our students.

While our faculty, staff and students are making a mark on our external communities, we are also making great strides toward realizing our strategic plan. Spring enrollment looks strong, and we implemented a significant upgrade of Blackboard over the Christmas break. The University Professional Status Committee, chaired by Professor Deborah Augsburger and Professor Ryan Phillips, will have its first formal meeting this week. The UPSC's charge for the spring includes reviewing sabbaticals, reclassifications, and emeriti, as well as developing educational programming for faculty going through the promotion and tenure process.

The University Budget Committee will also have its inaugural meeting this week. Chaired by myself and Teresa Krejci, and including faculty and staff representatives, the Budget Committee's primary charge is to provide institutional oversight through financial planning, coordination of budgets, and to determine funding priorities. The Committee will develop and recommend to the President a three-year budget with assumptions and projections, monitor budget performance and cash flow, and make recommendations for the budget and budgeting process.

I am also pleased to announce the formation of the Experiential Learning Task Force (ELTF), which has its first meeting on Friday. Chaired by Dr. Laura Franklin and Dr. Laura Wilmarth Tyna, the ELTF gets its impetus from the Strategic Plan's Pillar Two, which calls for the University to "Expand co-curricular learning opportunities that develop leaders; prepares competent professionals; animates the values of the Mission and positively impacts the region." Experiential learning as a pedagogy is consistent with the University's efforts to provide a "liberal and professional education grounded in the interaction of knowledge and fidelity in the search for truth" and to "promote the development of the complete person through the pursuit of wisdom and justice. Further, it responds to a national and international call for a relevant, practical, and professional education that benefits both individuals and society. The ELTF will conclude its work in fall 2020 with a strategic recommendation for enriching experiential and co-curricular learning at Lewis, including tactics and policy recommendations, projected outcomes, an assessment strategy, and implementation timelines.

I'm delighted to refer you to the updated web pages for Celebration of Scholarship ([COS](#)) and General Education at Lewis ([General Education](#)). I hope you will take advantage of the Coffees with Leadership, open UPBRAC meetings, provost lunches, and other opportunities to share ideas and listen to others. Knowing that members of our community have different ways of communicating and different comfort levels with speaking directly to the campus leadership, we have also created a web page for written and anonymous communication. This form can be found on the Faculty and Staff page. ([Faculty/Staff](#)).

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention that I am putting the final touches on this message during the Martin Luther King holiday. Over the years, I have settled on a practice of reading one of Dr. King's speeches during the holiday weekend. This year, I read Dr. King's speech to Cornell College, delivered on October 15, 1962. It's the speech that includes this famous passage: "I am convinced that men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don't know each other, and they don't know each other because they don't communicate with each other, and they don't communicate with each other because they are separated from each other."

This is a stirring statement, written and delivered in the social context of 1960s race relations and the political context of segregation. But it speaks to what we are still trying to teach our students in 2020. We want our students to learn that mastering the skills of dialogue across difference—cultivating empathy, listening to understand, and challenging assumptions—can prove foundational to meaningful and productive professional and personal lives. As a Lasallian community bound in association and challenged by the pressures brought on by cultural and political conflicts domestically and abroad, and by fiscal challenges internally, we will benefit greatly by more time *in contact with one another* through a broad range of formal and informal gatherings. I look forward to seeing, listening, and speaking with you over the next month.

With sincere gratitude for all the hard work that has gone into getting the semester off to a great start,

Christopher Sindt