

Summer of 2020 - and the road forward

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on behalf of

Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences, and Cooperative Extension Weekly Bulletin

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Mon 8/24/2020 2:28 PM

To: alvsce_bulletin@list.cals.arizona.edu <alvsce_bulletin@list.cals.arizona.edu>

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Good afternoon, everyone -

It's surreal for me that today is August 24 and we start our 2020 fall semester on Tucson Main Campus.

If you are teaching, advising, recruiting and providing other student services, today is the culmination of a hard summer's worth of preparation. In the counties, today will be like all of the other Mondays this summer--you continue finding new ways to deliver on our Extension promise to your community. We're all looking to how our phased return to in-person work will play out, and we will have extremely different experiences.

You have worked in our research facilities and on our experiment station units throughout the summer. Some never shut down and many had to do the hard work to close down and "restart." Since the June 1 restart began on Main Campus, there have been no reports of SARS-COV2 horizontal transmission in our research facilities. Your good biosecurity has paid off. You know how you can be a part of controlling this pandemic and do your work meeting the world's great challenges. You showed we can "walk and chew gum." You continued to change the lives of your students and postdocs.

This summer you have done additional hard work with passion and resolve on our university's immediate budget and finance challenges, our student re-entry plans, and the university's strategic decisions. You have been involved locally and nationally on our shared imperative to recognize and call out institutionalized racism for what it is, especially anti-Black racism. You've had difficult conversations and lost sleep. Today is the next day we move forward together resolving this seminal problem. We must have more difficult conversations, lose more sleep and never rest until we have fairness, equality and equity for everyone. As long as discrimination exists, we must keep walking forward on the long road to its demise.

Please take a moment now to stop, close your eyes, and celebrate how much you have accomplished and how much we have done together these past few months.

Last Friday, I met with our new first-year and transfer students to welcome them to our college. Like their returning colleagues, they face a sobering and unusual semester, which doesn't look anything like the dreams they had a year ago. They want to be on campus; they want to be in the classrooms. Whether or not we can achieve that goal is mostly up to them. They are going to have fight their biology on whether or not they will choose to do it.

Pandemic fatigue is real. Pace yourselves over these next hectic weeks. Be gentle on yourselves and check in on the people around you to see how they're doing. Reach out if you need a hand.

I hope you have been taking time for yourselves. It has been a challenge for me. This semester will be another tough one. I hope we will see a vaccine available by the spring. Until then we must do all we can to keep the pandemic at bay and keep our economy moving. We know it is hard, we know we will be frustrated, and we know we can do it--but we can only do it together.

Stay strong by giving yourself permission not to be.

Shane

My mask protects you; your mask protects me. We've controlled infectious diseases without vaccines for thousands of years. **Wearing our masks** means we can have a functioning economy and concurrently save thousands of lives.

All UA employees, students and visitors must wear a face covering inside all UA buildings, unless alone in a single occupancy office, and in UA outdoor spaces where continuous physical distancing of at least six feet is difficult or impossible to maintain.

Shane C. Burgess

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