



OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

February 19, 2021

Dear Palmetto College family,

I trust that your first “Wellness Holiday” this past Monday provided a good opportunity for much-needed, rest, reflection, and a recharge. Thank you for all that you do to ensure that we are able to excel in our mission to meet the educational needs of our students and communities!

In his 1980 book *The Wooing of Earth*, French microbiologist, environmentalist, humanist and Pulitzer Prize winner René Jules Dubos wrote that “the general formula of management for the future might be, ‘think globally and act locally.’” Our Palmetto College campuses and community have taken this axiom to heart as we work to keep ourselves and others safe during the current pandemic, and for the future. In fact, our positive COVID-19 cases continue to decline.

For the past week, ending Feb. 14, 2021, there was only one (1) new COVID-19 case reported across all of Palmetto College, specifically one (1) faculty member. Please continue wearing face coverings, washing your hands, and maintaining proper social distance. Your efforts to keep yourselves, your students, your colleagues, and your communities safe this semester are greatly appreciated and continue to be very effective. As we continue into this semester, please also make sure to follow all appropriate safety and physical guidelines for any necessary in-person meetings and gatherings; however, if you are able to do so, please consider continuing to convene virtual meetings. For weekly COVID-19 testing data for our Palmetto College campuses, please consult the [online dashboard](#) on our website.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, the Office of the Provost distributed the attached message yesterday extending the course evaluation accommodations through the Spring 2021 semester. After discussion with Senate Chair Dr. Ernest Jenkins, and input from the Palmetto College Deans and Academic Deans, we are pleased to share that the accommodations will likewise apply to Palmetto College. The specific details are included in the attachment.

During the current, ongoing pandemic, our Palmetto College faculty have seen changes in course delivery and student interaction. Students have a different level of interaction with their

faculty and fellow students. On Monday, March 1, surveys will be distributed to all Palmetto College faculty and instructional staff, non-instructional staff, and students, respectively, in order to gauge how well we are succeeding in delivering the high-quality education and student experience for which Palmetto College has become known. While we were successfully able to make adjustments based on your responses to the Fall 2020 semester surveys, we continue to value direct input from our various stakeholders that will help drive decisions about the Summer 2021 semester and beyond. These surveys are modeled on the previous surveys, and they can be completed in less than 15 minutes. Thank you, in advance, for your participation in helping us gather the important data that will inform future decisions.

As a reminder, South Carolinians aged 65 and older are eligible to schedule vaccination appointments. Our Palmetto College faculty and staff who are below the age of 65 are in phase 1B, and we hope to be able to share news soon about opportunities for vaccination. At the rate for which the rollout is progressing, it may be several months before everyone has had an opportunity to receive doses. Therefore, the option for temporary remote work has been extended for employees who are high-risk and vulnerable. If arrangements have been made with their supervisors, these employees may be permitted to continue working remotely through May 15, 2021, once they have completed a [Temporary Remote Work Authorization](#) form. Please refer to the [Palmetto College Reopen and Risk Mitigation Plan](#), and the [UofSC coronavirus website](#) for up-to-date information on our ongoing institutional and system responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This week, we also pause to join USC Union staff member Sharon Rupp in mourning the recent loss of her husband [Michael C. Rupp](#). Mr. Rupp died on Feb. 10, 2021, at age 78. A graduate of the University of Maryland and retired from the Social Security Administration in Baltimore, Mr. Rupp served on the boards of the Union Carnegie Library and Habitat for Humanity. He also worked as a social worker with the Salvation Army and was a devoted member of Augsburg Lutheran Church. Mr. Rupp is survived by his wife of 57 years, family, and friends. Due to current public health concerns, a memorial service will be scheduled for a later date. We offer our most sincere condolences and sympathies to Sharon and her family during this difficult time.

The University of South Carolina (Columbia Campus) along with our regional Palmetto College campuses will welcome a virtual reaffirmation committee visit from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools on Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) from March 22-25, 2021. USC Lancaster, USC Salkehatchie, USC Sumter, and USC Union, along with the Palmetto College Central Leadership Team, will meet with the committee on Monday, March 22. We extend our deepest appreciation to Dr. David Hunter and Dean Chris Nesmith who have provided leadership for our Palmetto College SACSCOC effort, as well as to the many others across Palmetto College who have contributed substantially to preparation for the forthcoming visit. In fact, you are all doing excellent work, and it is greatly appreciated!

In lieu of the traditional weeklong spring break, the University is observing five "[wellness holidays](#)," the first of which was this past week on Feb. 15; the remaining dates are Feb. 25, March 12, March 30, and April 21. Additional details on these wellness holidays may be found

on the [University website](#). As part of the University's "Be Well. Your Way." Campaign, staff supervisors are encouraged to allow employees a 30- to 60-minute wellness break during each of these workdays to [learn more](#) about wellness topics such as good nutrition, effective parenting, or how to manage stress; engage in a meditation exercise through [Gamecocks LiveWell](#); or engage in other activities which are keeping with the intent of these days, the revitalization of mind body and spirit. On these "wellness holidays" and every day, please take appropriate time for self-care!

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, Associate Provost John Catalano, Faculty Senate Chair Ernest Jenkins, or your respective Campus Dean. As always, thank you for your outstanding efforts to serve our students and this great state in fulfillment of the Palmetto College mission!

Looking forward,

Susan

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February 17, 2021

Dear UofSC Columbia Faculty,

In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of the Provost released a statement about faculty evaluations for Spring 2020 and processed tenure-clock extensions for pre-tenure faculty. In November 2020, the Office of the Provost and the University Committee on Tenure and Promotion distributed a joint statement extending the course evaluation accommodations and offering general guidance for faculty evaluation processes. The Office of the Provost and UCTP wish to provide additional information and clarification in response to questions received, for both review committees and for faculty.

- Due to the ongoing challenges posed by the pandemic, the option for faculty to voluntarily withhold student course evaluations from any faculty evaluation process (annual review, tenure, promotion, post-tenure review, tenure-progress review) is now applicable for courses taught during Spring 2020, Summer 2020, Fall 2020 and Spring 2021.
- Because course instruction for Summer 2021 and Fall 2021 is expected to return to pre-pandemic standards, the option to withhold course evaluations is rescinded effective Summer 2021. If the university changes current guidance about Summer 2021 and Fall 2021 instructional modalities, this decision can be revised.
- For the duration of that same period (Spring 2020 through Spring 2021), units may also choose not to provide comparative data in faculty evaluation processes, given the difficulties of collecting viable data. Comparative data collection may be difficult or impossible for units with a substantial portion of instructors requesting evaluation data not be included, as well as for smaller units. Further, course modalities and student choice of modality may have shifted mid-semester. Finally, the pool of available data for those instructors who did choose to include their student course evaluations is unlikely to be representative. Given these complexities, units may choose not to provide comparative data for this period.

- Any teaching summary prepared by the unit for a faculty evaluation process should reflect teaching modality for courses taught by the faculty member, regardless of whether evaluation data and comparative data are available for this time period.
- The absence of comparative evaluative data should not be interpreted by reviewers as indicating a weakness in a candidate's file.

William F. Tate IV
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

F. Wayne Outten
Chair, University Committee on Tenure and Promotion

Due to the large number of emails that are distributed across our campus community, full distribution can take several hours which means that receipt times vary. If you are made aware of email messaging that you have not yet received, please be patient, as your email message is likely on its way.