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## Post-COVID Academic Innovation Task Force

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Reply-To: provostmail@gwu.edu

Wed, Dec 2, 2020 at 3:10 PM



A MESSAGE FROM  
**M. Brian Blake**  
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs



Dear Colleagues:

I am excited to understand and explore the numerous academic innovations that have emerged to us through the pandemic. The higher education landscape will look very different on the other side of COVID-19, and as we strive continuously to improve our academic programs and deliver on our value proposition to students, we must embrace innovations in technology, course instruction, and more, in order to realize our goal of preeminence as a comprehensive, global research university. With promising vaccines seemingly on the way, it is time to think about potential innovations that can strengthen our academic future.

As discussed previously with the Faculty Senate, I will form over the next few weeks a Post-COVID Academic Innovation Task Force, comprised of faculty, staff, and students, which will be charged with the goal of considering, and recommending, new and innovative ways of fulfilling our academic mission. The committee will consider ideas from a broad range of sources, including, but not limited to:

- Review of recommendations from the Strategic Plan's High Quality Undergraduate Education Committee for items that entail academic innovation (e.g. emerging technologies, pop-up courses, micro-courses, and hybrid instruction);
- Review of recommendations from the Strategic Plan's Distinguished and Distinctive Graduate Education Committee for items that entail academic innovation (e.g. interdisciplinary programs, market focus, credentials);
- Examination of emerging literature on the post-pandemic higher education landscape;
- Consideration of new options for course delivery, including those utilized by various institutions during the pandemic, and a consideration of the role of online and hybrid academic programs post-pandemic;

- Examination of predicted high demand for certificates, credentials, and other short-term academic experiences;
- Exploration of academic calendar possibilities;
- Exploration for implications to the research enterprise;
- Surveys of the faculty, staff, and students for ideas about academic innovation.

The committee must be open-minded and creative in order to explore the many possibilities of this endeavor. Members will need to be forward-looking and agile, with established expertise in instruction, scholarship, and student success. I pledged previously to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee that any academic planning groups would be at a minimum 75% faculty and chaired by a faculty member. This committee will adhere to those guidelines. I will appoint co-chairs to the committee in consultation with academic leadership and Faculty Senate leadership. I will rely also upon the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to appoint Senator representatives. I notified FSEC on November 20 my intent to solicit in the near future recommendations for committee members from schools and colleges, so both the FSEC and school/college deans may recommend faculty, staff, and students as potential participants. The Deans, Faculty Senate and I will review the recommendations prior to my finalizing committee membership. As the group needs to be nimble, I would prefer it to be between 12 and 20 members. I would like to charge the committee before winter break, and I will seek academic innovation recommendations from the committee by late spring in time for further consultations about those recommendations.

I am hopeful that we will soon see the other side of the pandemic. This committee will enable us to understand fully all our advantages and possibilities for innovation as we look beyond the pandemic towards our collective future.

As always, thank you for all of your hard work, leadership, and partnership.

Sincerely,

M. Brian Blake  
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

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**THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**  
WASHINGTON, DC

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