



15 May 2020

A Year Like No Other

Dear Members of the Pearson Community,

Greetings again from the virtual campus of Pearson College UWC. As we come to the end of a most unusual and challenging 2019-20 school year, I have a chance to reflect upon the truly global community that we have become. With students learning in “Pearson” classrooms and labs now located in New Zealand dens, Finnish bedrooms, Columbian dining rooms and everywhere in between, we are tackling “global education” like we never have before.

While our current Years 45 and 46 students are looking forward to the official end of their school year, our faculty continue to come up with thoughtful and creative ways to share a genuinely impactful and engaging online learning and education experience. For example, later this month, in [Pearson eNews](#), we’ll share one faculty member’s insight into how you teach a normally very hands-on and often outdoor-based Marine Sciences class virtually.

This year, like every year, our students never fail to amaze me not only with their resilience but also with their ingenuity and ambition to be positive changemakers even during times of disruption in their own lives and those of their families. Last week we heard about Year 45 student Beccah’s [Halifax Helpers](#) initiative, a volunteer-run online tutoring service offering free learning support for elementary and junior high school students in Nova Scotia who themselves are being home schooled during the pandemic.

But here’s the bonus – many of the other members of the [Helpers](#) team are students or recent graduates of Pearson! These young people, from Canada and countries across the globe, identified a gap, determined how they could help and acted quickly. If there was ever a good news story out of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is it. Congratulations to all those in the Pearson worldwide community who are also creating similar bright spots during this challenging time!

Here in the Province of British Columbia, we are hearing measured and cautiously optimistic news from Public Health officials such as [Dr. Bonnie Henry](#) and political leaders like Premier John Horgan. Last week, they laid out a strategy to [restart various sectors](#) including classroom-based learning in the public school system. Though Pearson is an independent school, we of course take guidance from health and government advice and directives.

While some public schools, subject to strict health protocols and continued reductions in community transmission of the virus, serving younger grades may offer limited openings late in May or June, our main focus is on the beginning of our 2020-21 academic year in late August. **For Pearson incoming and returning students alike, I would like to reiterate that we have every intention of welcoming those who are able to come to campus at that time, subject to public health directives, protocols and regulations** requiring those coming from other countries to self-isolate.

While we hope that many [international travel restrictions](#) will be lifted by then, we are nonetheless preparing to offer a blend of campus and online learning to ensure that all our students have access to a robust UWC education.

When classes do resume on campus, our obligation to all students and everyone on campus is to do our utmost to maintain a safe and healthy environment. This will undoubtedly mean changes to the way we teach in classrooms and labs, the way we interact at mealtimes and how we conduct our group and any community-based activities. It is impossible to predict which specific requirements will be mandatory in three months, but you can be certain of rigorous cleaning protocols, proper distancing in all learning, eating and informal settings, regular temperature checks and many other measures to safeguard everyone's health. We are indeed fortunate that our campus is located in a beautiful forested setting that lends itself well to socially distant learning in uncrowded outdoor settings!

Students around the world are grappling with the emotional gap of not having graduation or ending ceremonies together to celebrate and reflect upon their shared experiences. Even as we celebrate their successes – our Universities Counsellor told us that, so far, more than 100 offers of scholarships from major North American, European and other international post-secondary institutions have been extended to our graduating class this year -- I know our Year 45 students are feeling this too.

The last two weeks of May are normally a time of reflection, bay jumps and relief as the academic calendar and exams wind down. This year, there will be no on-campus leaving ceremony, no whispered pass-downs of knowledge, no wrenching goodbyes as the sun sets or rises above a grassy spot overlooking Pedder Bay. It's difficult to replace those experiences but we are making final plans for virtual, as 'traditional' as possible, year-end activities that will invite both year cohorts to celebrate this extraordinary and unprecedented year together.

Early May is also normally the time of the annual on-campus Board meeting; an opportunity for directors to meet with students and to lead seminars with them to encourage students to gain a better understanding of the governance role of our [volunteer Board of Directors](#) from across Canada and around the world. I'm sure it comes as no surprise when I tell you that this year's meetings were conducted entirely online.

These meetings were both uplifting and sobering. As I've said often, the resilience of everyone across the Pearson community sustains and supports us. Our College Directors are keenly

aware of the multiple stories of students overcoming barriers to continuing their learning remotely and of the many individual and collective efforts by Pearson staff to get them home safely and of faculty to help see them through successfully to the end of their school years.

Two important items considered and ratified by the Board are inspiring. I'm pleased that the Board has accepted a draft [Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan](#) that reflects views and recommendations brought forward by a generous cross-section of the Pearson community. Led by [Marcia Dawson](#), the process of creating this plan was robust and, when finalized, I look forward to sharing it with all of you and, in turn, hearing your ideas and actions to help our College be a better place of cultural safety and cultural humility.

Secondly, the Board also moved to proceed with development of a comprehensive consultative survey of all Pearson alumni as the first outcome from the work of the [Alumni Engagement Working Group](#). Anne McLellan, Chair of the Board of Directors will have more to say on these and other topics, such as a new agreement between the College and the UWC National Committee of Canada, in a concurrent message. And, we will share more details on all these in the near future.

The Board also took a serious look at the College's proposed 2020-21 budget with an eye to ensuring that Pearson has the financial capacity to continue offering a global educational experience that makes us worthy of the slogan, *Canada's School for the World*. Because of our collective commitment to merit-based opportunity and prudent financial stewardship, every UWC school in our movement is going through a similar evaluation process. I can tell you that, based on my regular discussions with other UWC heads, each institution to trying its best to come to grips with how a still-evolving pandemic will affect their respective resources and abilities to deliver an exceptional education. As we are well into the final quarter of our fiscal year which ends 30 June, the next few weeks will see many important decisions made. Again, I will have more to share with you on this shortly.

Once more, I want to thank every single Pearson friend and supporter, faculty and staff member, volunteer and [donor](#) alike. Thank you to those who have worked hard, very hard under trying conditions to keep our mission relevant and impactful to current and future students around the world. Thank you to those living and providing essential services on campus. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Please continue to take care of yourself and those close to you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ty Pile', with a horizontal line underneath.

Ty Pile
President and Head of College