

Dear faculty, staff, and students,

Let me start by introducing myself to those of you who may not know me. My name is Vandana Kohli and I'm honored to be the Dean of the amazing school of Arts and Sciences. In my office, I am supported by Stephanie Guerrero, the Administrative Analyst, Dr. Cindy Wyels, the Associate Dean, and Chanda Cunningham Spence, the Manager of the School's Academic Resources, and two Student Assistants, Juliane Martinez and Ariana Loaiza.

I wanted to reach out to all of you today to acknowledge the challenges you have faced over the past few weeks as we transitioned to virtual instruction and virtual operations. It has been difficult; and I want to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for taking on these transitions head on. These are not easy days, yet you have demonstrated tremendous resilience and patience. Thank you. As we continue to work together to face and accept the enormous challenges brought on by virtual operations, I find comfort in knowing that we will ultimately help reduce the spread and intensity of COVID-19 by minimizing the density of people learning, living, and working on campus. The sacrifices you and all members of our school community are making are crucial to quell this health crisis, and I am deeply grateful for your efforts in these unprecedented times.

To our students, I'd like to say that our continuing to educate in the face of such uncertainty highlights and underscores our collective commitment to you. I understand and empathize with your situation. I am a mother of two college aged young adults both of whom are currently at home with me. One of them is a senior who was scheduled to graduate this summer. We had plans for her graduation ceremony: some family were going to fly in from India, others from Canada, and still others from the Midwest and the East coast. It was going to be a grand affair. But, because of COVID-19 her school's graduation ceremony has been postponed and our plans have had to change accordingly. Many of you are also in this same situation. I feel for you. And, as in the case of

my daughter, I am extremely thankful to faculty across the country who know that we all depend on them to help students stay the course. So, whether it is degree completion or degree progression, we at CI hope to keep you on track. On that, you have my personal commitment as well.

I am also deeply concerned about how you are maintaining a sense of community. I know that school is more than just classes and academics. For most of you, school is a meeting space; a neighborhood in which you live or to which you commute; a home away from home. The current circumstances necessitate a need to find alternate ways to create a school community. I hope you will explore all the virtual options that are available to you so you can stay engaged. Remember, you know how to deal with the known and the unknown. After all, that is what we have taught you in every discipline housed in Arts and Sciences whether it is under the Humanities, Arts, Social, Behavioral or Natural Sciences. So have confidence in yourself like I have in you, and you will get through this and emerge stronger and more resilient than you are today.

To the staff, thank you for all that you're doing during this period of uncertainty. Your work life has altered significantly and I am so very proud of the manner by which you have coped. Daily, I hear words of appreciation from members of our community for you. You have enhanced the way we use technology to promote seamless campus operations in a virtual environment so that our faculty and students can continue teaching and learning. I am aware that these times have added to the complexity of your work particularly around rearranging travel plans, delivering mail, managing paychecks. I appreciate your patience and creativity. Our lab technicians also have my sincere gratitude because they have worked tirelessly to promote the educational mission as well. They've helped record lab sessions, maintain equipment integrity and lab safety, and assured that all

hazardous waste is disposed appropriately. I will continue to maintain regular contact with all of you so that we can address issues as they come up during our ongoing zoom meetings.

Finally, I want to send a loud shout out to our dedicated and talented faculty for transitioning all their courses to virtual delivery mode within a severely limited time period. I also want to thank the chairs and coordinators for their leadership. Your efforts have reminded us of the extraordinary gains we can make by staying mission focused. I am grateful to all of you for the creative manner in which you have responded to the challenges of virtual instruction. Faculty, please note that I understand that there are things that may not get done this semester because of the limits imposed by shelter in place orders. I am thinking of internships, community engaged learning, field placements, clinical hours, hands-on lab experiences, and other space-defined educational lessons. I know how much angst this has caused you and I assure you that my focus is not on what is missing. Rather, it is and will remain on all that you have done to provide uninterrupted instruction. I hope you will help me highlight those achievements. So, send me examples of what you've done and that which makes you proud and we will create an exhibition of sorts that will showcase our fortitude as a community of educators and learners. Several of you have put your research aside simply to manage this transition and again, I hope you'll remember that I understand and remain committed to helping you. Please let me know what you need and I'll do my best to assist you.

In closing, please note that all of us in the Dean's office are here for you. We have created a new link on the Arts and Sciences web page that will go 'live' by this evening where we will continue to post updated information related to COVID-19 including all communication from my office. I hope you will find this useful. I'm here for you, albeit, virtually so do not hesitate to ask if you need anything. I send you good thoughts and best wishes.