

May 1, 2020 Update

To the students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of Wabash College,

Our campus looked beautiful this week! We had warm sunshine early in the week, cold rain on Thursday, and it's sunny again today. What is obviously missing from our campus is the normal buzz that comes with the last day of classes and anticipation of final exams. Yet I've heard from so many faculty about the great discussions they've had; a student posted on Twitter that he had written the best paper of his life; Dean Feller told me that Wednesday night's Senior Colloquium was exceptional.

So, as we come to the end of a semester none of us will ever forget, I urge our students to finish strong and I extend my gratitude to everyone who has pulled together to make the best of a challenging situation. Wabash Always Fights!

Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb today discussed a detailed [five-stage plan](#) to re-open the state and, starting Monday, May 4, [Stage 2 of that plan](#) will begin. While certain aspects of our lives will gradually re-open, the Governor indicated that those who work in office settings are encouraged to continue to work remotely whenever possible. Wabash will follow that recommendation, and will not begin to bring back staff until the week of May 18, which is consistent with direction of our City and County. Senior Staff members will communicate how and when we will bring back staff in a gradual and safe fashion.

I am excited that we will celebrate our graduating seniors on Sunday, May 17 when we will host our [Virtual Commencement](#). Artie Equihua will give the Commencement Address. I hope everyone will tune in to help us pay tribute to the men in the Class of 2020.

If you missed the Senior Chapel Talk yesterday, make sure you go back to listen to the remarks from Owen Doster (biology major, global health minor), Waleed Elrefai (political science major, Spanish minor), Matt Fajt (economics major, business minor), and Ben Kiesel (Spanish and philosophy major, business minor). Their talks were excellent – emotional and heartfelt — and they leave giant footprints on our College. Taken together, these four young men represent all that Wabash has to offer: they were active in intercollegiate sports and WabashX initiatives; studied abroad and worked for the local health department; served in student government and led campus committees; planned fundraisers and executed big events. I am proud of what they accomplished at Wabash, just as I am proud of every one of our seniors.

The College is in the process of updating many of its COVID-19-related web resources. Our Student Health Center has created [a new webpage](#) with important health information intended for Wabash students, but applicable to all in our community. As we continue our scenario planning for the fall, we will augment the medical resources with other pertinent information. While at this point we have not set a date for announcing how the fall semester might unfold, I'm pleased to give you a sense of our planning efforts:

- The Healthy Campus Task Force, led by Chemistry Professor Ann Taylor, is meeting three times a week to make recommendations about how Wabash can safely bring students back to campus and maintain a healthy environment when they are in residence.
- The Academic Policy Committee, working with the Registrar’s Office, is meeting weekly to determine ways that we might adapt the Wabash classroom and schedule to address any potential public health concerns.
- We are measuring all of our classrooms to determine maximum capacity for each so that we can provide safe social distancing and still have a residential learning experience.
- We are evaluating all of our residence halls, fraternities, and College-owned houses to determine the very best way to house students and still provide options for limiting the number of students in each space so that we can provide enough social distance for safety. Our campus services partner, Sodexo, is deep cleaning all living units this spring and summer. And we are expanding our current capacity to house students who may need to be isolated for a time.
- Following the lead of the NCAA, we are working closely with our North Coast Athletic Conference partner schools to plan a range of options for how best to safely restart our intercollegiate athletics program.

Since today is the last day of classes for the semester, I will close by sharing from my Twitter feed. Early this week, the Communications Office posted a Twitter question that basically asked followers to list their single favorite course at Wabash and the reason why. While the Twitter poll was aimed at current students and alumni, I suspect our faculty have their own favorite courses taught at certain points in their careers that stand out. Realizing that everyone is not on Twitter, I’ve done a little “cutting-and-pasting” (below) to give you a sense of the replies our Twitter question got. I think you will agree that the responses speak beautifully to the depth of the relationships our faculty form with students and the critical importance of liberal arts education. These relationships endure and our commitment to the liberal arts will sustain us.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay home. I promise you, in return, Wabash will stay strong.

With best wishes,

Gregory D. Hess
President

“The best class I’ve taken at Wabash was _____ because _____ . Fill in the blanks.”

Mass Communication with Dr. Herzog; though Wabash doesn't have a journalism major, I learned more in one class than a good many of my fellow grad students had in 4 years of their undergrad programs.

“History of Czech Puppetry.” I built a puppet in Prague. #bestclassivetaken

“20th Century American Literature” with Prof Bert Stern. He helped me to believe in myself (after switching majors) when I didn’t think he even noticed me in the back of class.

“Fatherhood” with Dr. Olfson, “Social Psychology” with Dr. Horton, and “Gender Communication” with Dr. Geraths. All eye-opening classes with great insight to be a better person and to understand the world around us.

“Roman Art and Archaeology” because John Fischer is one of the greatest mentors/professors anyone could have. “History of Espionage” because Dr. Barnes was brilliant in the classroom managing discussion and prompting spirited debate.

“Philosophy of Religion” with Professor Blix, “King Arthur Freshman Tutorial” with Professor Herring, and “Econ 1” with Professor Barreto. The first of many classes I took with each of three great professors.

“History of American Political Thought” with Dr. Butler. Actually read and discussed the key texts of American political thinking. Class also had only two students.

“Philosophy of Hannah Arendt” with Dr. Trott because it forced me to empathize evil actions and understand their roots. It re-enforced my understandings of culture-based action and the difficulty associated with living to a Kantian good will.

Don Herring’s “History and the Novel” because it enhanced and enriched the way I appreciate literature.

“Immigrant Literature” with Dr. Rosenberg. “Constitutional Law” with Dr. McLean. “Islam and The Religions of India” with Dr. Williams. “The Afro-American Experience” with Dr. Frederick. Each of these classes and professors required me to think about the world beyond my prior personal experience.

Oh man, I can’t pick just one: “Cultures and Traditions” with Dr. Blix, “Organic Chemistry” with Dr. Olsen and Dr. Novak, “Religion in America” with Dr. Baer (“Sects and Cults” was awesome too!), and “Multicultural Literature” with Dr. Rosenberg.

I absolutely loved my chemistry professors and chemistry major, but the liberal arts experience of so many diverse classes really helped round me out and help me in my career as a teacher.

“C&T” with Dr. Butler, “Rhetoric” with Dr. Walsh, and “Constitutional Law” with Dr. McLean. All three classes exposed me to thinkers I’d never encountered and started me down the long and winding career path I’ve taken.

“Enduring Questions 2” with Dr. Hollander because reflecting on texts as a freshman is different than reflecting, revisiting, and supplementing the same ones as a senior. The class had a great group of students and it was a creative and dynamic approach to Wabash’s liberal arts.

“*Canterbury Tales* and Chaucer” taught by @elvysshpopet because I’m a nerd and fart jokes in Middle English are cool! Also, “History of Maritime and Naval Warfare from 1450-1750” taught by Dr Morillo because...well...pirates!

“Physical Chemistry” with Prof. Schmitt. He made it the most fun class I’ve ever taken and it laid the foundations for what I’m learning in grad school right now! During a quiz we gave Prof. Schmitt a pop culture pop quiz. He did alright

“Greek Art and Archaeology” with Prof Fischer, “Enlightenment Philosophy” with Dr. Placher, “Cell Bio” with Dr. Munford, and “Molecular Biology” with Dr. Polley.

“Business and Technical Writing” with Dr. Herzog because I learned how to write and gained confidence.

Anything Peebles, Placher or Blix was teaching.

Freshman Tutorial: “Using Failure to Find Your Happy Place” with Dr. Bobby Horton. I learned how to turn ‘failures’ into opportunities and how to cherish the journey.

Really tough one, but it’d be hard not to say “Philosophy of Friendship” with Prof. Hughes, because it was an introduction to philosophy for me and the perspectives we looked from opened my mind a lot.

“Constitutional Law” with Prof. Himsel because it genuinely changed the way I think. Deciphering two briefs a night and defending either side of both cases in class changed how I understand others. Taking positions I didn’t agree with showed me there is very little certainty in the world.

Definitely “Fatherhood” with Dr. Olofson because I never thought a class could change my life so much by just understanding the impact a father’s role can have on our development.