



April 20, 2020 – Resilience & Gratitude

Dear Alumni, Friends and Supporters of Pearson College UWC,

On behalf of everyone from the College, I hope that you and your loved ones are coping well with the uncertainties that COVID-19 has brought to all our doorsteps. As always, please continue to follow the advice of your respective public health agencies and authorities for your own good health and that of your communities.

Today, I would like to share an update about how we at Pearson College UWC and our students around the world are moving from managing a crisis to, as best we can, managing the consequences and outcomes of a crisis. Outside the “normal” teaching and learning sessions, our faculty and staff have heard from many students, some of whom have shared images of their new home “classrooms.” We’ve posted some of these on our [social media pages](#) and, if you have a Pearson scholar in your home, I encourage you, with their permission, to share images with communications@pearsoncollege.ca.

From our educators I’ve heard stories about creative thinking like teaching Astronomy by encouraging students to share and learn from images of the night skies in their parts of the world. A task perhaps made easier due to the reduction of air pollution accompanying the pandemic-related economic slowdown. One of our biology teachers gave us a peek into one of her online classrooms where she was leading a lesson for second-year Biology students about immune systems and vaccine development. As she said, “It’s always a good day for me to teach biology but right now it’s more relevant than ever!” Our Marine Sciences and Marine Biology courses, normally very hands-on, given our location on the Pacific, are adapting to a new reality that doesn’t include shoreline access a few steps from the lab.

Personally, I continue to meet regularly with UWC International Office leadership and with my fellow UWC school and college heads from around the world. Globally, we are grappling with overarching issues such as the pandemic’s effect on international travel, varying levels of mitigation measures in place in different jurisdictions, lobbying to help influence decisions made by the IB so that our students would not be disadvantaged and understanding the worldwide economic impact on a global educational movement like the UWC. Individually, we continue to assess and anticipate what may happen on our respective campuses in the coming Northern Hemisphere spring and summer months.

At Pearson, for example, events like the Pacific Paddling Symposium scheduled for the May long weekend, as well as several weddings over the summer have been cancelled or postponed. As I mentioned, alumni reunions are being reimagined with considerable input and leadership coming from volunteer alumni for the respective reunion years.

Our primary focus is the potential impact on the beginning of our academic year in late August. While our planning is based on a number of possible scenarios, the short version is that we simply don't know which scenario will play out. Health leaders here in British Columbia, like Public Health Officer [Dr. Bonnie Henry](#), last Friday led citizens through a comprehensive and [cautiously optimistic model](#) of where B.C. is projected to go in terms of the pandemic. But she emphasized that significant restrictions will remain in place for some time. And, of course, as a global school that annually draws students from more than 80 countries and territories around the world, much depends on what happens outside our small corner of the Earth.

As we continue to assess and adapt, several aspects of life go on. Many of you will recall that we are engaged in an [Indigenous Vision and Reconciliation](#) process intended to help build a Reconciliation Action Plan. Remote discussions and meetings carry on and community consultant Marcia Dawson continues to gather important views gleaned from stakeholder surveys.

Today, I want to recognize a number of people who deserve our congratulations and gratitude. Recently, two first-year students, Olivera and Maggie (Ruiyan) from Macedonia and China, respectively, were named Runners Up in the [2020 Regents University London Filmmaking Competition](#) for their short film, [Our Community](#), a heartfelt look at life on campus during a rare snowfall. "A well shot and well thought out piece which really communicates the love you have for the Pearson community," said the judges. I couldn't agree more.

Second-year student Ivana from Croatia was awarded a 2020 [UWC GoMakeADifference](#) grant to support [Čigrin Let](#) (Project Tern's Flight), a local sports initiative in Zagreb that uses basic elements of Taekwondo to have a positive impact on the everyday lives of young people with special needs. The grant helps Čigrin Let, one of the only such programs in the West Balkans, purchase needed training equipment to help fight marginalization of special needs individuals. Ivana credits Experiential Education Coordinator Marija Uzonova Dang for her help in reviewing, editing and structuring what was ultimately a winning proposal.

Every year, behind the scenes and with little fanfare, dozens of [UWC National Committee of Canada](#) volunteers dedicate many hours of work and commitment to the task of evaluating, reviewing and selecting deserving young Canadians who will ultimately attend Pearson or one of the 17 other UWCs around the world. Under the most unique and challenging circumstances, this process is continuing, thanks to National Committee and allied provincial and territorial committee volunteers working with Nina Moroso, Executive Administrator of the UWC-NCC. On behalf of our Board Chair Anne McLellan and myself, thank you so much. Actions like these demonstrate how important it is to continue looking forward and working for a positive future for the UWC.

I would also like to express our collective gratitude to the people who have continued to support the College in many ways. For example, several alumni, pre-registered for planned summer reunions, generously turned their registration payments into donations. Similarly, many of the individuals who purchased tickets to one of the three planned *One World* performances in March have also generously donated the value of their unused tickets back to the College in support of scholarships. Our thanks as well to operators of the show venue -- the [Royal McPherson Theatres Society](https://bit.ly/2UFjs8F) -- for making the donation process easy for us! Remember, if you haven't seen it yet, experience or re-live the on-campus version of *One World 2020* at <https://bit.ly/2UFjs8F>

Finally, I want to acknowledge our deep gratitude for the quick and generous response from our global community of supporters. Over the past few weeks, we shared our need for financial support to ensure students could travel home safely and return to their studies in a new online environment. In a matter of days, alumni, families, and other supporters from across the world responded.

These donations not only make it possible for our students to successfully complete their academic year, but also send a powerful, uplifting message to students, staff and faculty, that at a time of need, we can count on you. As one of our students recently shared, "Online learning is the only thing I can hold onto, the only thing that says there can be a future beyond this pandemic."

Thank you for making this possible. Take care of yourself and those close to you.

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

Ty Pile
President and Head of College

P.S. I'm sure many of you have heard or read about the tragic series of shootings yesterday in Nova Scotia on Canada's east coast. Together with all Canadians, we are saddened by these senseless acts and mourn along with the families who have lost loved ones. As we all struggle to understand more about the impact of this unspeakable tragedy, we send our sincere wishes of compassion and resilience for the people of Nova Scotia.