

# FINLANDIA

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## UNIVERSITY

### May 1, 2020 Weekly President's Message

Finlandia Community,

Happy May (Vappu) Day!

Checking in with you on this Friday is different. Today marks the completion of our academic year. So I'll say this time around, thank you not only for what we accomplished together this past week ... but what we accomplished together this year.

Below I borrow bits and pieces from a spring email greeting that will go to Finlandia's friends and alumni. It captures my thoughts today as I rehearse our past academic year and plan with you and others for the summer and fall.

On March 13 we suspended face-to-face instruction and resumed online instruction on March 18. The transition to fully online delivery required all of us to dig deep, innovate, and support each other like never before. And we did. Faculty and student learning support staff delivered a virtual version of uncommon attention that I believe was second to none. Our students demonstrated extraordinary will and resolve in the face of unwelcome and unexpected change and challenge. We are very proud of their effort, patience, and success.

Restrictions related to COVID-19 do not allow us to gather on campus this coming Sunday for our originally scheduled May 3<sup>rd</sup> baccalaureate and commencement events. Nonetheless, Finlandia is celebrating! Our baccalaureate service will be streamed live this Sunday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10am. And, on Thursday, May 21 at 6pm, we are all invited to Finlandia's special edition, virtual commencement ceremony. Together with graduates and families, alumni and friends, we could make Finlandia's 2020 graduation attendance the largest in history--a not inappropriate salute to this year's graduates whose perseverance is especially notable. I hope to "see" you there!

As you know, we are planning various scenarios for fall 2020. Our lead scenario, however, is to open safely with face-to-face instruction. Though externally generated restrictions or developments in the fall remain unknown, this is how we are positioning ourselves. It is our best self. It is what our students expect and value.

We know that even though we open on campus in the fall, we cannot open as usual and open safely. A safe open requires us to plan for low-density configurations on campus and with new and effective health and wellness protocols. We have multiple teams working on this plan and other related scenarios to best position Finlandia for success. We will share more information over the coming weeks.

While we plan and budget for these necessary preparations, Finlandia must also build revenue shortfall scenarios for the coming fiscal year. COVID-19 is influencing how families are

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thinking about college for fall 2020. A significant nation-wide downturn in fall 2020 enrollment is projected. We don't plan on participating! We are acting now to mitigate these negative influences and maximizing emerging opportunities that otherwise would not be available. Yet, with equal resolve we will build actionable plans should our best efforts fall short.

My word for our students today was, "anticipate," most literally, "to take possession of something beforehand." This is how I think of it. When I anticipate I am choosing to orient and act toward a particular future. So, it works like this for me: I anticipate a wild and warm welcome to all our students this fall. So, that is my orientation and toward that I act.

PJ