LEADERS CALL FOR FLEXIBILITY AND UNDERSTANDING AS WE DEAL WITH NEWEST WAVE

When faculty gathered for the Spring 2022 Faculty Conference, all eyes were on the emerging omicron variant of COVID-19. The ongoing challenges and stresses of living and learning in a pandemic were a key focus for remarks from leadership, and attendees heard a clear call for shared responsibility for maintaining the ongoing health and success of Gonzaga.

Vice Provost for Student Affairs Kent Porterfield shared data that showed significant compliance with vaccine mandates by undergraduate students (96%) and announced at least two additional booster clinics in February and March for students to receive their booster within 14 days of becoming eligible. Employees, too, may also receive their booster through these clinics (held in Cataldo Hall) if they are not already boosted.

New guidance for student isolation and quarantine practices consistent with CDC recommendations was shared, along with operational modifications necessary to handle increased demand anticipated with the surge of the highly contagious variant. As we previously experienced, students are expected to need additional care, including accommodations, meal services, testing, mental health support and other services. Academically, as well, faculty have been asked to offer additional support and flexibility, such as virtual office hours, assignments for students unable to attend class, and broader use of virtual presentations.

There was a robust call by faculty and administrators alike for strong enforcement of masking requirements, and direction on how to report noncompliance.

Interim Provost Ken Anderson echoed the call for flexibility, understanding and patience over the next several weeks as the omicron variant comes and hopefully, goes.

“We need your goodness to shine through,” he said.

He announced that the academic strategic plan has been temporarily placed on hold given pressing pandemic issues.

Anderson encouraged faculty to contact their dean to change course modality, if possible, and underscored that, while not ideal, necessary changes can be managed through a commitment to flexibility and working together.

“‘We know how to work together as a team and support each other,’” he emphasized.

Citing the success of GU’s efforts in managing the virus over the past two years, President Thayne McCulloh acknowledged we are not in the same place we were in 2020, or even earlier this academic year and that we approach our ongoing work with optimism and hope.

“Patience and grace,” were the watchwords President McCulloh used as he outlined the challenges facing all higher education institutions in the face of the new variant.

“We must try to reduce the incredible burden our health system is bearing,” he said, noting that while we all want things to be simple, straightforward and predictable, “we do not have that level of control.” Options and choices must be considered. He emphasized that significant increases in case numbers are expected over the next few weeks, but that experts forecast it will disappear quickly.

Building on relationships developed earlier in the pandemic, GU has secured additional testing services from InCyte, coordinated with Providence for booster clinics, and continues to seek the Spokane Regional Health District’s guidance and recommendations on managing the campus environment. It’s quite feasible that students will have to isolate in their dorm rooms, he said, noting that “we don’t want sick students in class, and faculty will want to ensure access to course materials to enable all students to stay on track for academic success.”

Additional semester priorities McCulloh discussed included:

• Provost search, with finalists expected to be identified by March
• Staff turnover, hiring, retention, compensation
• Strategic Enrollment Management planning
• Adjunct faculty compensation
• Faculty Handbook – administrative review
• VP/Chief Human Resources Officer search
• Program planning for the next residence hall, informed by lessons learned from the pandemic
• Preparing for the next major fundraising effort, with projects and initiatives that match benefaction priorities

“We are going to work together, diligently, as quickly as we can to effectively manage in the face of this new variant,” he said. “We are committed to working together as a community.”
A $25,400 grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust will help a new biology professor at Gonzaga University hit the ground running.

The "Start-up Research Package" matches funds from Gonzaga to provide equipment, supplies and summer research stipends for the new faculty member, who will take up duties in summer 2022. The new hire, currently being recruited, will be a field ecologist whose research and teaching address issues of conservation and resource management.

"This support from the Murdock Trust makes a huge difference in our ability to attract excellent teacher-scholars and give them what they need to be successful at Gonzaga," said David Boose, chair of the biology department.

"We prioritize getting students involved in authentic research in the field," Boose said. "Startup funds help faculty get their projects going right away, gathering data that can then support applications for competitive grants in the future."

In doubling what Gonzaga offers for early start-up funds, the grant allows the department to compete with larger institutions for top faculty talent.

"The Murdock Trust has been fundamental in creating a top-tier undergraduate research environment at Gonzaga, and our students continue to reap the benefits of that. We are extremely grateful for all of their support."

Biology is the second-largest program in the College of Arts and Sciences, with more than 360 majors, 33 minors and 28 full-time faculty and staff.

Offering Women and Children

Thanks in large part to the vision and heart provided by Gonzaga senior civil engineering student Jess Vazquez, local women's and children refuge Transitional Living Center has installed solar panels on the roof of its nearly 125-year-old building, saving half its normal energy cost, which in turn is being pumped back into programs to help women emerge from poverty and homelessness.

So says Edie Rice-Sauer, Transitions executive director.

Vazquez had volunteered at Transitions as part of a Christian Leadership class a few semesters back. She cared for children, giving time to mothers working on bettering their own situations.

When Vazquez and her Gonzaga Sustainable Energy clubmates began researching their next project in fall 2020, solar energy rose to the top of their list. They partnered with RE-volv, a California-based nonprofit that works to provide solar energy access to those who are excluded from the benefits of the clean energy economy, to find an appropriate local nonprofit in need of an energy assist, says Sarah Friday, senior civil engineering student.

Transitions was the first nonprofit to respond to club inquiries. It had already bought into renewable energy, installing solar panels on 15 of its 24 Home Yard Cottages and on its Women’s Hearth downtown drop-in center in 2017-2018.

The Transitional Living Center is a 50,000-square-foot building on a hillside in north Spokane, built in 1898 as an orphanage, Rice-Sauer says. RE-volv assessed the structure, which had a good roof and a large portion of its operating costs in electric heat, which made it an excellent candidate for solar power.

Gonzaga students partnered with Spark Northwest, a nonprofit focused on increasing access to renewable energy, which helped fund the project through a grant and will ensure that the current and future solar energy projects at Transitions are executed successfully.

"This installation is a 40-kilowatt solar system, which will save $16,000 over the course of the panels’ life," Vazquez says.

The Gonzaga Sustainable Energy Club connected with RE-Volv through the Center for Community Engagement and worked closely with Jim Simon and the Sustainability Office on the project. By the way, it was this club that spearheaded the project to add solar panels on top of the Sustainability House a few years back.

Vazquez will graduate in May and assume her role as an environmental engineer with RIDOLFI, Inc., in Seattle, working on initiatives aimed at environmental cleanup and remediation.

Gonzaga students provided the impetus to install solar panels on the roof of the Transitional Living Center for Transitions in north Spokane.
After Four Decades at GU, Interim Provost
Steady at the Helm with Good Feel for Campus Pulse

He’d still give most anything for a chance to have played in the 1981 NIT

Currently the longest-serving Gonzaga dean, Anderson seemed a natural fit to serve in the role of interim provost.

As a player:

“Above and beyond the relationships, some of which we’ve sustained to this day, I think it was knowing we were pretty good; knowing maybe we put Gonzaga’s basketball program on a path, at least from a cultural perspective, to continue to do good things, whether that be how we played or how we balanced academics and athletics,” he says.

In 1980-81, the Zags posted a 19-8 record and thought for sure they’d get a postseason nod. Gonzaga even printed tickets to host a first-round game in the National Invitation Tournament. But disappointingly, a call never came.

Anderson was the team’s sixth man, first player off the bench. During his senior year, starting guard Tim Wagner was injured at Pepperdine with four games left in the season. Anderson went in and never came out for the rest of that year. Had the WCC won the conference, Anderson would have had an award for best 6th man in the league, for the rest of that year. Had the WCAC season. Anderson went in and never came out at Pepperdine with four games left in the season. Anderson was the team’s sixth man, first player off the bench. During his senior year, starting guard Tim Wagner was injured at Pepperdine with four games left in the season. Anderson went in and never came out for the rest of that year. Had the WCC won the conference, Anderson would have had an award for best 6th man in the league. . . for the rest of that year. Had the WCAC season.

In 1981, GU printed tickets to a first-round game in the National Invitation Tournament that Anderson and his teammates never got a call to attend.

As a professor:

“Teaching is the interaction with students and the opportunity to help someone improve. Some of the things I teach might be brand new, some common sense. Some will help you today, some, if remembered, might not help until years later. But the part of me that wants to help people be better is key,” Anderson says. He has regularly taught a projects class, which serves as a consulting service for area businesses. “For many students, they have spent a lot of their educational lives figuring out what will be on the test, trying to reduce uncertainty. We turn them lose in this class and there is nothing but ambiguity. It provides a great transition to life after Gonzaga, which sometimes lacks structure and direction. So they must take their skills and do a little discerning, as the Jesuits would say,” says Anderson, who teaches this class with colleagues Maureen Duclos and AJ Hawk. “It can be a great learning experience.”

As dean:

“My reward is in knowing that we have not only continued our tradition of outstanding education, but we’ve built on it and adapted to changing and challenging times, with increased competition, diminished resources, changing demographics, and a fundamentally different landscape. People want different things out of education than they wanted 15-20 years ago. We provided it regardless of what’s happening around us. It’s a credit to great people in the business school,” Anderson says.

And as someone who has spent most of the past 43 years as a participant in the Gonzaga model, Anderson observes the University’s most significant change has been its maturity as an organization. “With that comes tremendous growth in numbers of students and employees, in brand and name recognition, in capabilities of our people, and in growth of our structures and processes.

“But what hasn’t changed is that we have great people, whether we’re talking students, faculty, staff, alumni or community. That is the cornerstone of all of our success as an institution.”

Ken Anderson says he is not a good linear thinker.

With a wry smile, “My wife, Sue, always put the toys together at Christmas,” he says. That’s why you often find the new interim provost sitting down in Hemmingson or at Starbucks at Ruby and Sharp to start his day. Not for a good cup of coffee – he doesn’t drink it. But to find undistracted contemplative time to survey information about his day and put it together in a logical way.

“I don’t mind people interrupting and giving me something better or more effective to think about,” he adds. But by the time he leaves his spot, his plan for the day is set, at least until the first new challenge of the day presents itself.

Colleagues often describe Anderson as a thoughtful leader.

He first set foot on campus in 1979, a strapping 6-foot-6 transfer basketball player from Los Angeles Harbor JC. He fell in love with the beauty of Spokane and Gonzaga’s campus. It was an exciting time for a young athlete, with GU moving from the Big Sky league (i.e., Pocatello, Bozeman, Moscow) to the West Coast Athletic Conference (now WCC) with competitors in Los Angeles, San Diego and the Bay Area.

He secured his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in business administration from Gonzaga and earned his Ph.D. from Nebraska. He returned to GU in 1986 to start his teaching career.

He would later serve as associate dean and acting dean, and since 2016 has been dean of the School of Business Administration, which is celebrating its centennial this year.

But for the moment, Anderson has moved out of Jepson and back into College Hall to assist a “highly competent team of professionals” in keeping the academic side of the house moving forward until a permanent provost is seated in fall 2022. Seasoned business professor and administrator Molly Pepper is directing the day-to-day operations of the business school in his stead.

Spirit asked Anderson to list some of the highlights of the various roles he has served here.

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As a player:

“When we moved the conference forward, like with the expansion to 10 teams with BYU and Pacific, and some behind-the-scenes things we did with men’s basketball to help the schools and the conference do better on a national level,” Anderson says. And the conference as a whole has continued to be among the most viable academically.

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Gonzaga University will observe its 10th annual Gonzaga Day Feb. 12 as Zags Celebrate Connection, the formal theme for the 2022 activities. A major initiative for this Gonzaga Day is launching the Zag Business Directory, an opportunity for GU alumni to connect with each other, "whether you might be looking for a CPA in New York, a winery in California or a restaurant owner in Denver," says Drew Rieder, director of regional chapters in Gonzaga’s Alumni Relations office. One may register to be included in the Zag Business Directory at www.gonzaga.edu/business-directory.

In addition, there will be many game watches in Gonzaga’s Alumni Relations office. One may register to be included in the Zag Business Directory, the formal theme for the 2022 activities.

Major Lessons from “Minority Media: Changing Climate, Fire Regimes Around Campus

- An evening with the author of "Braiding Sweetgrass," Robin Wall Kimmerer, is Feb. 17, 5:30 p.m., via Zoom. A link will soon be available.
- "Home: Imagining the Irrevocable," an exhibit featuring visual, musical and literary artists exploring the concept of home. The exhibit examines how home continues to be defined by Black Americans amidst the historical and contemporary challenges of displacement, marginalization and otherwise. Gonzaga Urban Arts Center, 125 S. Stevens St., through Feb. 26.
- "The War that Destroyed America," with Benjamin Hopkins, Feb. 22, 7 p.m., Wolff Auditorium.

Women Lead Spokane Conference: "Inspiring Our Inner Wisdom In March 9 featuring a day full of featured speakers, including Nina Warrior Sandy Zimmerman (’99) and keynote Angela Jones (’16 J.D.). For information and to register, click Women Lead.

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, Feb. 10, 7:30 p.m.; tickets $30-$40. Dance as Cara Personalis Annual Seven Dance Film Festival, Feb. 16, 7:30 p.m.; Arcis Saxophone Quartet, Feb. 17 7:30 p.m., tickets $30-$40; Spring Jazz Concert, Feb. 23, 7 p.m., tickets $30-$40; GU Choirs Social Justice Concert, Feb. 26, 7:30 p.m.; GU Symphony Orchestra Concert, Feb. 28, 7:30 p.m., all Woldson Performing Arts Center.

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ZAGALERT JUST GOT FASTER AND MORE INCLUSIVE

Gonzaga’s new emergency notification product, Rave Alert, which became operational with the start of spring semester, can deliver 8,000 text messages in just 12 seconds, along with email and phone messages. The former system could take up to six minutes to do the same.

“The foundation for ZagAlert is caring and support for our community. And not just for those who have a Gonzaga email address,” says Matt Eastman, ITS project manager. “This new iteration of ZagAlert enables our vendors, folks from Sodexo and Follett, and outside contractors to opt-in to our emergency notification system.”

Another advantage of this new ZagAlert platform is the ability for campus guests, parents of summer campers, theater-goers or basketball fans, to opt-in to the emergency notification system for the time they and/or their children are here.

“We only use our emergency notification system when a life safety event or major operational change is taking place,” says Becky Wilkey, director of Campus Security and Public Safety. “So it is important that we can get the message disseminated promptly. This new platform gives us tools to do this. The receiver won’t notice any difference; but the sender of the message will be able to customize alerts and messages much more quickly.”

Interestingly, students in the experiential leadership program proposed this new system.

“The University listened to the students, we saw the need and adopted the plan over a yearlong period of discernment and fine tuning,” Wilkey says.

The director believes ZagAlert will better promote a safe living and learning environment, build community trust and foster prospective student and family confidence in campus safety and security.

Zags Help Zags with Window Weatherization

The Gonzaga Center for Climate, Society and the Environment initiated a pilot project in January to purchase and distribute up to 100 window weatherization kits, free to Gonzaga student renters in the Logan Neighborhood. The kits are being distributed by four of the Climate Center’s undergraduate climate literacy fellows and by the student club Gonzaga Environmental Organization (GEO).

“Many of the homes in the Logan are older, with minimal insulation, old furnaces and single-pane windows,” says Brian Henning, director of the Climate Center and professor of philosophy and environmental studies. “Because landlords typically don’t pay utilities, they have little incentive to improve these things.”

In addition to reducing students’ utility bills, the window-weatherization kits can help students reduce their carbon footprint. Each kit includes instructions on how to calculate carbon footprint. Students may establish a free account to calculate their footprint before installing the weatherization kits. Then, students can track their utility bill and determine how much their footprint did or did not go down relative to the same month in the previous year.

This online tool is a way for residents to reduce their resource use and waste. A window-weatherization program could contribute to this initiative. The Climate Center assisted the city of Spokane in developing the online tool, available at https://sustainablespokane.org/.

Henning says future efforts may include work with landlords and local utilities in implementing other energy-saving projects in the neighborhood as the Climate Center continues to find ways to provide resources and opportunities to meet the challenges facing humanity and the wider natural environment.