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**To:** [ProvostNotes](#)  
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Good morning!

I hope you all were able to get out and enjoy some of the beautiful weather this weekend – especially in advance of what looks to be some significant winter weather coming our way on Wednesday and Thursday. Please prepare to transition your courses to online delivery if necessary and/or please be flexible with students who can't make it to class due to road conditions or school closings.

A few items of note:

**PMC Marketing Campaign** - Later this week, [dreambigger.otc.edu](#) will go live to kick off a comprehensive marketing campaign for the Plaster Manufacturing Center. You'll likely see advertising on multiple platforms, and hopefully your students and neighbors inquire about the PMC. Direct anyone curious to the website, which will share all of the possibilities of the PMC. A team of OTC staff is trained and prepared to handle inquiries, schedule tours, and help turn potential students into enrolled students.

**The Future of Higher Education** – I ran across [this interesting blog post](#) a few weeks ago. Written by a history professor, it makes a few predictions about what higher education will look like 15 years from now. Although this is an opinion piece, most of what's written here mirrors the results of recent higher ed research. I don't agree with all of the author's predictions, and some I'm agnostic about. But based upon what we see happening around us with students and the labor market, there are some predictions that I believe are spot on. Namely:

1. **Threats to existing institutions are all around us:** No longer will colleges and universities be the only options for education and training beyond high school. Therefore...
2. **Competition within the higher education sector will intensify:** This is happening now. And these are not minor players. The article mentions Amazon, Google, and Microsoft as companies that have jumped into the higher education space. *And perhaps most importantly...*
3. **To compete, colleges and universities need to “double down” on the academic experience:** This means fostering relationships between faculty and students and increasing project-based learning opportunities.

OTC has lost 5,000 students – yes, *five thousand* – over the last decade. Couple that with an alarming and growing opinion shift about the value of higher education; [around 40% of Americans now believe that college isn't worth it](#). How can we change their minds? And when we do, how can we give them an optimal experience at OTC? This is a question that the [Student Learning Experience Task Force](#) is exploring, but we all have a role in solving this problem. One of the main things that faculty can do is in the third point above: keep fostering those relationships with your students and continue providing them with meaningful, relevant learning. Help them understand *why* and *how*

your class will help them in the future.

**OTC Cares** – As we talk about the importance of relationships with our students and better serving adult students, I wanted to share an email that one of our instructors received from a former student at the end of last semester:

*I truly hope you are there when I graduate because my journey would have ended in December of 2019 if it hadn't been for you. I almost gave up a few times, and when pandemic hit it was super hard, but I just kept telling myself, I can do this! I want you to know that when I left your classroom that December, you set me on fire! My first day at class I remember telling myself that I didn't belong there and that I wouldn't be able to do this...just like everything else in my life since I quit high school. But after my first semester I felt something I hadn't felt in so long and that was belief in myself. It was powerful and that fire is still burning in me today! My whole life has completely changed. I am a better happier person than I think I have ever been. I married the girl of my dreams and mother to my children and fell in love all over again not only with my wife but with life as well. Waking up every day used be something I dreaded but now I am up before my alarm even goes off and ready for whatever my day may bring me. A few years ago I would have laughed at someone if they told me I'd be graduating college at any point in my life but now I can confidently say I am going to be the first person to ever graduate college in my family and it all started because I walked into your classroom.*

Things are hard right now. Teaching and serving students is tough business these days at all levels. But what helps me is staying grounded in the moment so I can remember why I'm here. Emails like this help me. I hope it helps you as well.

Enjoy 60 degrees today!

**Tracy M. McGrady, Ed.D**

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