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To: [ProvostNotes](#)
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Good morning!

Last week was an awesome week for student engagement at OTC! On Thursday, we welcomed around 1,000 high school sophomores to campus for Explore OTC, and the Student Engagement Council hosted their first convocation speaker, filmmaker Liz Smith. The Student Engagement Council is only a few months old, but is already growing in membership. As we enter a post-pandemic world, our students are craving more interaction. It's gratifying to witness so many staff and faculty members go above and beyond to create these opportunities for students.

In addition to that, on Tuesday we hosted the OTC/MSU joint leadership meeting in the Plaster Manufacturing Center. On Wednesday at the Fall Board of Trustees Retreat, I presented an overview of academics at OTC and shared our most recent course evaluation data. The trustees were very pleased and asked a lot of excellent questions. We are fortunate to have a governing board which is supportive of OTC and proud of the work we do.

This week I will visit with Faculty Senate, which I always enjoy. As organizations grow in size, communication becomes more challenging. I find that periodic visits to Faculty Senate help to keep communication flowing more easily and help promote collaboration. If you are a faculty member, I encourage you to get involved with Faculty Senate.

Students at OTC aren't the only ones who want to engage with others; turns out faculty like it, too. CAI hosted the first Faculty Unplug and Network (FUN) in September, and because it lived up to its name, they're doing it again! Join us on **Wednesday, October 26 at 2 p.m. in the Plaster Manufacturing Center 216D**. Agendas are strictly forbidden at FUN, but fortunately snacks are not! RSVP at facdev@otc.edu.

As we move forward placing students at the heart of all we do, and at the center of decision-making, it necessarily causes us to reflect and make changes. As we consider how to best respond to declining enrollment, one central question to ask is, "What's keeping them away?" [This article summarizes a study](#) which asks that question. You can read the article for yourself, but I'll summarize the key takeaways:

- Cost remains the main obstacle, but it isn't the only one.
- Program flexibility is important.
- Students want guidance in the form of academic counselors.

In many ways, this study is cause for optimism when we compare the results to OTC's current initiatives. Our shift to the Student Success model of giving each student one person to provide proactive, holistic help for navigating their college journey – from courses to cost to life circumstances – puts us on the cutting edge. And our continued growth in online, hybrid, and live virtual learning modalities helps address the need for flexibility.

But we need to keep going. The world has changed, and students are voting with their feet. The college-going experience is different and holds a different value. We are competing with employers who don't care as much about traditional schooling and private companies entering the higher education market. As this study points out, around 47% of young adults have taken, or are taking, a class via YouTube. Companies like [Outlier](#) and [StraighterLine](#) are offering quality education at a reasonable cost.

So what do we offer that sets us apart? Our people. Our faculty. The relationships students develop while they're here. A rich and fulfilling education. These are things we need to lean into while simultaneously being responsive to what students are telling us they need.

Wishing you all another great week!

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