To the Campus Community,

Weeks ago, we couldn’t have possibly imagined the challenges that we are facing today. In times like these, people really show you who they are, which leads me to say that I am exceptionally proud of (but not surprised) how our community – students, faculty, and staff alike – have risen to the occasion and responded with efficiency, patience, and true compassion. Together, in the past two weeks alone, we have:

- Transitioned all of our classes from in-person delivery to a number of online formats;
- Helped almost 2,000 students move off-campus much earlier than anticipated;
- Ensured that students and employees had access to health and wellness supports at this incredibly stressful time; and,
- Transitioned almost all of our staff and faculty to a remote working environment.

The scale of these changes has been significant, to say the least and I want to thank every one of you for helping make this happen. Crises have a way of bringing out the best in people, and I think it’s fair to say that we have seen the Xaverian spirit, as we know it and describe it, exemplified. You have gone above and beyond to help each other through very uncertain times, demonstrating resilience and patience when adapting to new learning, teaching, working, and living environments.

I also want to offer a special thank you to those employees who continue their work on campus because their responsibilities cannot be completed from home. It is important that we, as a community, recognize that there are a number of our colleagues who cannot be at home with families or loved ones throughout the day. They are working hard to maintain critical operations on campus. On behalf of the entire StFX community – our staff, faculty and students -- thank you to our frontline staff.

For all that has been done, there is still much to do. In the coming days we will be looking at how we will complete exams and evaluations, exploring, for example, the option of a pass/fail system. We have heard your questions, and want you to know we take them seriously. Please know we are considering these options very carefully and will reach out with information as soon as we can. At the same time, this environment is very unpredictable and new problems and concerns arise. Please bring any of your concerns forward to our attention so that we may be of assistance.

I also want to remind the campus community that now is a time to look after yourself, as well as one another. The stress and anxiety COVID-19 has introduced to us all is truly unprecedented. Please review the various mental health supports available and use them. There is no judgment given or shame associated with asking for help. This is precisely the reason for which these tools and services are designed. I have listed some at the bottom of this message for easy reference.
We have to recognize that removing ourselves from our routines and all of the interesting and rewarding parts of our workplace is not easy. In isolation, I find myself missing direct contact with colleagues and missing the friendly faces and conversations with students, staff, and faculty, some of the things that we may take for granted. In the coming weeks, StFX will provide information and materials to help you to stay connected. Look for calls for participation – we need to stay in touch.

Finally, please continue to share the strength and influence of our StFX community by checking in on friends, relatives, and neighbours who may find this time particularly hard. In recent days, a number of people have suggested replacing the phrase ‘social distancing’ with ‘physical distancing’ to reflect that, although we are separated physically, we can stay connected socially. So pick up the phone, launch Skype, or have a group Zoom session with your friends and family. Check in with one another, and ask for help if you need it. We will come through this by making sure that everyone feels seen, respected, and cared for.

Stay safe and healthy.

Kevin B. Wamsley, PhD.
President and Vice-Chancellor
St. Francis Xavier University

Resources for Students:

- Healthy Minds NS
- Good2TalkNS: 1-833-292-3698
- Crisis Text Line: text “GOOD2TALKNS” to 686868
- NS Mental Health Crisis Line: 1-888-429-8167
- To arrange a phone meeting with a StFX Health and Counselling Centre staff member, email idrouin@stfx.ca.

Resources for Employees:

StFX’s Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) can provide you with immediate and confidential help for any work, health or life concern.

Access your EFAP:

- By phone: 1-800-387-4765
- By website: workhealthlife.com
- Download the MyEAP app in your app store