



January 22, 2021

To Our SUNY Poly Community:

After a momentous week that started with the celebration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, followed by the inauguration of Joe Biden as the 46th president of the United States, I wanted to share my optimism and community-focused priorities as we await the start of (virtual) classes in one week.

I am proud that SUNY Polytechnic Institute seeks ways to serve. We joined a number of SUNY institutions by hosting a New York State vaccination center at our Utica campus and receiving SUNY approval for our spring 2021 plan to support our health and the health of those around us. With new weekly testing of SUNY Poly's on-campus [faculty, staff](#), and [students](#), along with [pre-screening before arrival and daily screening](#) when on campus, we will continue to follow New York State and local county COVID-19 guidelines. Please read all updates to the [spring plan](#) so that we can remain dedicated to a smooth and healthy semester.

In addition to the spring 2021 plan, I am extremely thankful for Chief Diversity Officer Dr. Mark Montgomery for hosting Monday's virtual conversation and reflection, stimulated by excerpts of Dr. King's "I have a dream" speech. As we feel the profound sadness from years of racial injustice, and challenge ourselves to make meaningful progress in ways we continue to fall short, we must also maintain the hope that emanates from the teachings of Dr. King. I particularly appreciated Dr. Montgomery's challenge to each of us to grow and engage others with maturity, respect, and understanding of historical and cultural context.

In a very similar vein, I am also grateful to Interim Provost Dr. Steve Schneider for the virtual conversation he hosted on Tuesday, the day before we watched the peaceful transfer of presidential power. By asking participants to reflect on their impressions of this presidential transition, and considering those impressions in context provided by other transitions in our memory, this event provided another opportunity for community members to share unique thoughts and perspectives in an open, respectful forum.

Looking forward, we can use similar habits of deliberative engagement, honest airing of differences, and a service-centered mentality to help SUNY Poly reach its full potential. We must assure our programmatic offerings enable every student to succeed in our fast-changing, complex economy, and do so in a way that prepares each student for societal leadership as an informed citizen. As a distinctive institution within SUNY and New York State, we should embrace our unique, research intensive culture and nurturing, personal environment. Our research agenda, underpinned by the highest quality scholarship, not only holds great potential for fundamental discovery, but also facilitates innovative, entrepreneurial opportunities for students and staff. Opportunities abound to work closely with industrial partners and collaborating institutions as we tailor programs for meaningful applied learning experiences.

So as we embark on the spring semester, I ask you to join me in a renewed effort to deeply engage with each other and those with whom we partner in our communities. The pandemic has made this



difficult, at least in the ways familiar to us, and yet I continue to be amazed at the way we have all remained connected and committed despite the circumstances. We can build a strong future for SUNY Poly by expanding programmatic links and a shared vision between our Albany and Utica campuses, and by increasing transparency and dialogue between SUNY Poly administration, governance groups, students, faculty, and staff.

Current events can often paint a bleak picture. COVID-19 has impacted us all, and in no way do I wish to trivialize the real hardship that so many families have experienced. Yet, our response to the pandemic as a university community has also shown that through service and engagement, we can make a real contribution to our region and state while advancing steadily toward the high aspirations we have for SUNY Poly. I cannot wait to see the great work we will do together as we carry this momentum forward, and I feel honored to join you in achieving this.

I wish you all a most successful spring 2021 semester, and even more importantly, health and safety to you and your families.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tod A. Laursen
Acting President
SUNY Polytechnic Institute