Dear UMACRAO Membership:

The world has changed a lot since we last met in South Dakota. I want to first say that I hope you are all doing well. It’s been a challenge for everyone, no doubt, but I hope you and your family are making the best of this unique time in world history.

I know we are all busy right now with grades, virtual commencement and planning for an uncertain Summer 2020 and Fall 2020, but I didn’t want to wait any longer to provide an update on the 2020 UMACRAO conference. I asked the Executive Committee to meet earlier this month to discuss our potential options.

Our discussion was wide-ranging as we tried to consider everything. Here were our primary conclusions:

There is much uncertainty regarding the pandemic situation in the Fall. We all hope October and November will be a return to normal, but a spike in cases is also possible.

Travel budgets are likely to be heavily impacted, especially at smaller institutions. We expect many members will not have a travel budget in the Fall.

Those who do have a travel budget may not be able to attend because of increased workload if we are back on campus.

As a volunteer organization, we do not have the resources to spend 6 months planning a conference that we ultimately end up canceling.

We can produce a virtual program which will be free to our membership.

These factors taken together ultimately lead us to the decision that our best alternative would be to offer the 2020 conference in a virtual format. Please note we are not considering this a cancellation. Even though we will not meet in person we understand that it is more important than ever that we work together. The conference planning committee will work over the next few months to produce a program that can be posted on our website, free of charge to members. We will explore recorded sessions, live chats, a virtual business meeting, and possibly a virtual networking event. You will receive more information soon. This was a tough decision but we believe free content is in the best interest of our membership.

At the 2019 conference, I said that UMACRAO is “our university” and I asked you to engage or reengage in the organization. I asked you to take a journey with me as we worked together to get the most out of UMACRAO. We had no way of knowing that journey would lead us to a virtual conference and social distancing. This might not be the journey we planned, but together we can make the most out of our new, temporary online university.

Lastly, I just want to say thank you for everything you do to keep your institutions and UMACRAO strong. You are appreciated.

Best wishes to you and your family,

Chance McWorthy

2020 UMACRAO President

Director of Academic Operations and Registrar Mount Mercy University