

Transit Umbra Lux Permanet
Shadow Passes, Light Remains



A sundial on the south wall of Philips Memorial Building is inscribed with this phrase in the original Latin. The sundial was a gift from the Class of 1944 on the occasion of its 50th reunion.

You need to look carefully to find the sundial – a glossy-leafed magnolia growing nearby competes for attention. But when Sue and I take walks around our now quiet campus, I find my eye drawn not to the profusion of greenery and spring blooms but to this simple, solid sundial and its reassuring words.

The Class of 1944 graduated at a time when the University and the entire world were rocked with uncertainty. Yet we rose to the immense challenges then, just as we are rising to meet immense new challenges today.

Rest assured, nothing will ever stop us from fulfilling our core mission – now and always, West Chester University is razor-focused on student success. We count on technology more than ever in these extraordinary times but we also count on what's been critical to our success in ordinary times – the industrious, adaptable and highly creative faculty and staff who are the lifeblood of this institution. While our buildings may be shuttered, our dynamic University is going strong.

Our 17,000-plus students are engaged in remote learning and busier than ever as final exams draw near. Co-curricular activities abound, from online leadership training to virtual wellness consultations. Multicultural mentors connect virtually with their mentees; students in service organizations read books to children via Zoom and sew masks for frontline workers; the Career Development Center's Ambassadors conduct resume reviews and practice interviews. Even the iconic tradition of Banana Day took place a short time ago, complete with online dance videos and contests.

Today's reality has turned our attention to a variety of virtual activities and events in an effort to combat the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. Like many universities across the nation, WCU is quite saddened to postpone its May Commencement ceremonies, but must do so to help protect our graduates and their families and friends, as well as our faculty and staff. As you know, this decision is in keeping with the same proactive strategies pursued by Governor Wolf and Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education. Know that we are committed to holding an in-person graduation ceremony when it is safe to do so. Per our usual practice, all of our graduates will receive their formal degrees in the mail at the usual time in June, following a review of final transcripts.

Looking ahead, both of WCU's summer sessions will be held via remote modes of instruction, as will new student programs. Following guidance and directives from federal and state authorities as well as from Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education, we hope to make a decision about fall semester operations by early July and will update our website as soon as such plans become final.

I will close by leaving you with a few reflections I shared with our students during a recent online Town Hall. I reminded them that as we navigate this present moment in time, we are drawing upon reservoirs of strength we might not have known we had. When we tackle new obstacles, we are building resiliency. When we reach out to others who are suffering, we are growing in empathy and compassion. When we approach critical decisions with not just a Plan B but also a Plan C, we are developing the flexibility and agility we need to survive and ultimately thrive.

I am very proud of where West Chester University is today and I am humbled to be a part of this campus community. Thank you for your support and your many contributions to WCU. Stay safe, and stay strong.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Fiorentino". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" and last name "Fiorentino" clearly legible.

Chris Fiorentino, Ph.D.
President, West Chester University