We are all learning to live in “a different normal.” As with so many other institutions, The University of Texas at Dallas has had to adapt to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. I am proud of how the members of our department have responded to this challenge (page 8). When students were asked not to return to campus after Spring Break, and all non-essential staff left to finish out the semester in virtual classrooms, many of our staff stayed on to maintain University operations.

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Dr. Calvin D. Jamison, Vice President for Facilities & Economic Development

Bron Clayton, Building Services Supervisor
Facilities Management

Haywood McNeill (Interviewer): How long have you been a Building Services Supervisor for UT Dallas?

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On January 10 of this year, University President Richard Benson and Vice President for Facilities & Economic Development Calvin Jamison addressed employees in the Executive Dining Room of the Jindal School of Management (above) during our F&ED’s New Year’s Holiday Event. After reviewing the past year’s efforts and sharing their plans for the future, they joined Associate Vice President for Facilities Doug Tomlinson in donning aprons and serving our staff (below). The varied menu included Parmesan risotto bites, stuffed mushroom caps, barbecue meatballs, grilled chicken quesadillas—and of course, cake! (right) Beyond recognizing the accomplishments of our staff, the event was also an opportunity to collect canned food donations for the Comet Cupboard.
The Sciences Building is Ready for Fall

The Sciences Building is on track to open this fall. As the new home for UTD's Physics Department, this 187,000 sq.ft. facility contains a dozen classrooms, offices, 150- and 300-seat lecture halls and The Market dining option — plus laboratories for research and instruction in cryogenics, optics, magnetism and electricity. A special large collaboration space within the Sciences Building will allow for research and classroom areas to be joined together.

Helping Out the Comet Cupboard

Even in the middle of a pandemic, this April the team at Dining Services was able to put together a donation for the Comet Cupboard, a program that provides food and personal-care items to people in need within the UT Dallas community. The donation included bottled water, cereal bars, toaster pastries and more than 200 pounds of fresh fruit.

Bring a Big Appetite

Panda Express® in the Student Union served over 15,000 lbs of rice last year. That’s a bit more than the estimated living weight of “Sue,” the famous Tyrannosaurus Rex specimen housed in Chicago’s Field Museum of Natural History.
Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in North Texas, our staff rose to meet the challenges posed by this unprecedented health crisis.

Our Custodial staff started by increasing the frequency of their cleanings. Then they brought in electrostatic guns, fogging agents and other equipment to help deep-clean and sterilize the most frequently-used parts of campus. From doorknobs to counter-tops to telephones; to every corner of our restrooms, the University has been getting disinfected every day.

When the order went out for students to stay home after an extended Spring Break, and for non-essential personnel to evacuate campus, many of our staff stayed to keep UT Dallas operational.

Our Dining Services staff found new ways to keep feeding those students who were unable to leave campus and needed to stay sheltered-in-place within their own dorm rooms. Dining Hall West was quickly reinvented as a place that provided a changing selection of take-out meals, and kitchen techniques kept getting refined to improve on both service and safety.

As seen clockwise: A member of the landscaping team tends to some plantings in anticipation of the day when students will return to campus; a selection of carry-out meals prepared for students who spent the semester sheltering their rooms; the Dining Services team that quickly learned a new way to feed students during quarantine; Chef Gene Cristiano taking the UTD Teaching Kitchen on-line.

As seen counterclockwise: A custodial team cleans and disinfects a classroom; a lecture hall is prepared for social distancing; a building lobby with a bottle of hand sanitizer, front desk sneeze guard, distancing cones and signs alerting visitors to our policy on wearing masks, washing hands and social distancing; a facilities worker wearing personal protective equipment performs seasonal maintenance on one of the University’s reflecting pools.

As with UTD’s regular classes, our free Teaching Kitchen moved on-line to show our students how to cook quick, healthy meals from wherever they were sheltering.

Mail Services is quarantining all incoming packages.

Facilities staff have kept up with scheduled repairs, maintenance and landscaping work so that the University will be prepared for the day when students, faculty and staff can return to campus.

Our Economic Development team is working to convert our next Economic Development Conference into a virtual event.

In preparation for a fall semester under “a different normal,” sneeze guards are being installed at service counters, hand sanitizer stations are appearing in building lobbies and classrooms are being marked to help students maintain social distancing. Supplies of disinfectant, sanitizer and reusable masks have been secured and are being offered to representatives for returning groups of faculty and staff.

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A DIFFERENT NORMAL
We live in a world being devastated by a pandemic with a reach unlike any that humanity has seen in over a century. We live in a nation confronting a racial history and legacy which hasn’t yet reconciled, under a struggling economy, facing an upcoming election which promises to be divisive. We live, study, teach, work and perform research in an institution that will not go untouched by these events.

Most of us have lost people we know to COVID-19. We’ve all felt the impact of supply shortages, and have seen neighborhood businesses close their doors, sometimes for good. While doctors and researchers around the world race to learn the properties of this novel virus, protesters in our very metropolex are rejecting the few tools we have for slowing its spread, seeming to turn their backs on medicine and scientific evidence itself. Every store counter has become the potential scene for a showdown between an essential worker and an anti-mask protester.

In March of this year we learned that Black EMT Breonna Taylor was shot to death in her Louisville home during a police raid, under circumstances which became more alarming as each new detail of the procedures that lead to her killing was revealed. This May the world witnessed Audubon board member Christian Cooper, a queer Black man, being falsely accused of threatening a white woman when she called the police on him after he’d asked her to follow Central Park dog leash rules. The very same day we saw another Black man, George Floyd Jr., who’d recently been laid off from his Minneapolis security job due to COVID-19’s effect on his workplace, die when a white police officer knelt on his neck for nearly eight minutes. People stopped asking nicely for historic grievances, from police reform to confederate statues, to be addressed.

This has been a year of record voter turn-out in many state elections. After seeing outraged Kentucky primary voters banging on the doors of a closed polling station, we’ve all heard the calls for less barriers to voting in the upcoming national election, and calls for more options to vote safely in the middle of a pandemic. Now, less than one hundred days before the election, those calls are only getting louder.

We shouldn’t be surprised if turmoil and protests come to our campus —and stay— until something truly changes. We need to be prepared to take a hard look at ourselves as an institution; to see where and how we must do things differently; to do our part in addressing the injustices of the past and setting up practices that will ensure a better future.

After all, there are no gates and no ivory towers at UT Dallas, just open vistas in all directions.

Dr. Calvin D. Jamison,
Vice President for Facilities & Economic Development

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We live in a world being devastated by a pandemic with a reach unlike any that humanity has seen in over a century. We live in a nation confronting a racial history and legacy which hasn’t yet reconciled, under a struggling economy, facing an upcoming election which promises to be divisive. We live, study, teach, work and perform research in an institution that will not go untouched by these events.

Most of us have lost people we know to COVID-19. We’ve all felt the impact of supply shortages, and have seen neighborhood businesses close their doors, sometimes for good. While doctors and researchers around the world race to learn the properties of this novel virus, protesters in our very metropolex are rejecting the few tools we have for slowing its spread, seeming to turn their backs on medicine and scientific evidence itself. Every store counter has become the potential scene for a showdown between an essential worker and an anti-mask protester.

In March of this year we learned that Black EMT Breonna Taylor was shot to death in her Louisville home during a police raid, under circumstances which became more alarming as each new detail of the procedures that lead to her killing was revealed. This May the world witnessed Audubon board member Christian Cooper, a queer Black man, being falsely accused of threatening a white woman when she called the police on him after he’d asked her to follow Central Park dog leash rules. The very same day we saw another Black man, George Floyd Jr., who’d recently been laid off from his Minneapolis security job due to COVID-19’s effect on his workplace, die when a white police officer knelt on his neck for nearly eight minutes. People stopped asking nicely for historic grievances, from police reform to confederate statues, to be addressed.

This has been a year of record voter turn-out in many state elections. After seeing outraged Kentucky primary voters banging on the doors of a closed polling station, we’ve all heard the calls for less barriers to voting in the upcoming national election, and calls for more options to vote safely in the middle of a pandemic. Now, less than one hundred days before the election, those calls are only getting louder.

We shouldn’t be surprised if turmoil and protests come to our campus —and stay— until something truly changes. We need to be prepared to take a hard look at ourselves as an institution; to see where and how we must do things differently; to do our part in addressing the injustices of the past and setting up practices that will ensure a better future.

After all, there are no gates and no ivory towers at UT Dallas, just open vistas in all directions.

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