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**Subject:** Update, April 4  
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Dear Family of Arts,

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Well, it's been quite the week, for all of us, I expect. For those of you who've spent the past couple of weeks in the unexpected task of remote teaching, kudos to you for responding so nimbly and thoughtfully to the sudden demands. And for those of you who've spent the past couple of weeks assisting and supporting those engaged in the unexpected task of remote teaching, much praise to you for responding so nimbly and thoughtfully to **their** sudden demands. I know that everyone in the Faculty has pulled together and done a tremendous job in helping our students finish out their term with as little stress and disruption as possible. (Hmmm. You might gather from my use of the word that I'm not one of those who considers "disruptive" to be a propitious term. But that's a whole other story. Happy to tell it some time. If you want.)

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This week saw our first virtual Senate meeting. That was an interesting and slightly surreal experience, and probably the more so for the three individuals – the President, Provost, and University Secretary – who were actually physically in the Senate chamber. As those of you who've been in there know, it is so vast that clouds routinely form under the ceiling. To see Feridun, Jim, and Karen triangulated across this immense space, socially distancing from each other by about 800 feet, was rather peculiar.

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This week also saw the inevitable, though sad, cancellation of spring Convocation. I'm one of those nerds who actually genuinely enjoys Convocation, and the opportunity to check out everyone's shoes.

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I expect what people may be feeling the most at the moment is the sense of uncertainty that comes with the realization that the "emergency" state of affairs is likely to continue considerably longer than many of us first thought, a matter of months rather than weeks. At Senate, the President identified the following as some of the most pressing challenges ahead of us: educational continuity for our domestic students; the potential loss of many of our international students; the impact the hiatus is having on our research; and the potential for cyber-threats from those exploiting the crisis (I myself have received one or two phishy e-mails). There are many factors that are simply beyond our control, but at the same time I do believe that it's in our power to address and mitigate many of the difficulties we're facing. This Faculty, and the institution as a whole, has a lot of good minds and a lot of good will, and I'm regularly seeing people rising to the challenges and coming up with creative ways to address them. Maybe we can't resolve the crisis, but we are certainly putting our best feet forward to manage it.

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And finally, for those of you who might have been offended by some remarks made in last week's YouTube video on the subject of cats ("they're not that important"), here is Pluto's apology: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtZZAVdvToA>.

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As ever, though slightly hairier,

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[Sheila](#)

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[PS. And stay home!](#)

[PPS. Remember, we're here to help you anytime. Well, not precisely \*\*here\*\* of course – more like we're all over the place. But just reach out and ask.](#)

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The Faculty of Arts acknowledges that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.