Dear Dear People,

A while ago I decided to sign up for the Oxford English Dictionary Word of the Day. Each day I get an e-mail with a different word, plus its etymology and definition. Fortunately, they don’t tend to send me words like “horse”, “the”, “swim”, “fork”, or “disestablishmentarianism”. Generally they send curiously obscure words or neologisms that have now made their way into the official dictionary of the English language. I make note of the ones I particularly like, but I have to admit I don’t tend to remember to sprinkle my daily conversation with them. Now’s the opportunity, I think, since a lot of my daily interactions occur with me sitting in front of the computer with multiple files open in front of me – who will know if I am checking to see what intriguing vocabulary item I can drop into the discussion? So wait for it.

I promised you an update on enrolments for the Spring term. It’s not a surprise that at the moment they are higher than they were last Spring: with so many co-op students unable to take a placement, many of them are taking the opportunity to enroll in classes. Currently, we’re up over 3,000 BIS (bums in seats) in Arts courses from last Spring. The increase in Arts enrolments comes from all Faculties except Engineering (and even so, Engineering is only down by a few BIS). There’s a couple of caveats to this: one is that it’s not a true comparison, since the figures for last year are from the count date (June 1), and there’s always slippage between the beginning of term and the count date. The other is that students who have enrolled in a full slate of five courses may discover that taking five courses remotely is more challenging than taking them live, so we may see some drops there (and if students are able to secure a job at the last minute, we’ll also see some drops).

Once again, I would like to thank you for shifting so nimbly into remote delivery, both those of you who will actually be doing the teaching and those of you who are offering crucial support to this endeavour, including our new co-op hires – you’re doing extremely important work, work that may be very different from what you’re accustomed to, and I’m so grateful. I also wanted to say that I really appreciate how understanding you were with our students as everyone scrambled to finish the Winter term. I know that you will all be extending that understanding and compassion into the Spring term, because it will be just as necessary – so thank you again!

In other news, this past week has seen some work on organizing ourselves at the institutional level for overseeing our road forward in the next few months, for the short term, as well as trying to look forward to the long term. I realize that’s a bit vague at the moment, so I’ll be letting you know more details as soon as I can. For now, I just wanted to reassure you that we are thinking about all this. A decision on the Fall term will probably be made before too much longer. If you’ve been listening to the various surveys, both national and international, you’ll know that everyone would prefer a “live” experience come this fall (though parents are more cautious than students), but that many will be willing to participate in interim remote delivery of teaching. Some – and perhaps it will be a large some – will decide to put off their education until they are able to
be on-campus. It’s an uncertainty, like other uncertainties these days, and I’ll do my best to keep you informed as we move forward.

If you are looking for something entertaining to do with your days and nights (and nights and days and days and nights...), here’s something that came to my attention this week: the Getty Museum Challenge. Of course, you’re probably all already aware of it – I am generally sadly behind the times when it comes to popular memes. Believe it or not, I thought I was pretty original in coming up with the notion of the “Covid 19” being analogous to the “Freshman 15”, in terms of weight gain. Somewhat chagrined to learn that others have been talking about it for weeks. Anyway, back to the Getty Museum Challenge – these are really pretty entertaining, and I think the people who’ve engaged in them have been having a good time creating and performing them.

Well, I checked my list of Oxford words of the day, and I’m kind of surprised (or maybe not) to see that most of the ones I decided I like are really kind of negative (at the moment, about 83% of them). Hmmm. So I ended up not wanting to use them in this message after all, but I’m sure that eventually I’ll be able to find some use for a sentence like: “Don’t boody like that, you wallydraigle! You may think you’re schmick, but you don’t puppyfie me! You’re just being literose and fellifluous!”

Sheila
xoxox (virtual, of course)

PS. Does anyone else get fascinated with their own image in Teams or Zoom? Or am I just weird?
PPS. You knew it had to be coming: Sad Dog Diary.

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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.