

Dear Redhawks,

I am writing to you on what has been a momentous day in the history of Southeast Missouri State University. Today, as we start the last half of the spring 2020 semester, our campus is almost empty. All courses began remotely today. I have a lot of emotions about that, and I'm sure you do, too. So, I wanted to visit a little bit about this.

First, let me say, I'm disappointed you are not here on our campus. This move was not an easy one, in a number of ways. I know this change brings anxiety for some of you not familiar with remote learning or worried how your courses may translate to another format for those of you concerned about technology and access. We do not take the decision to move to remote learning lightly. Please know that it was with the safety of our students, faculty and staff foremost in our minds that this decision was made.

Second, I am very proud of how quickly everyone is transitioning to this new normal. In the last week, our faculty and staff have worked to move over 2,100 classes online. More than 2,000 classes that weren't delivered remotely two weeks ago now are. While I am certain that things may not have gone perfectly for you or your professors today, we are all working towards smoothing out the wrinkles. If I could change the difficulties you may be experiencing, I would. I have seen how hard our faculty have worked these last few days. I know the stress this has caused them. I also know how concerned you, our students, are about your education and your future.

Technology is both wonderful and frustrating. I know as we use it more in the coming weeks, we'll experience both. I ask two things of you when that occurs. First, know that your professors work at an institution like Southeast because they love working with students. We're an institution where faculty come *here* because they want to work with *you*. This transition to less personal contact with you will be difficult for them. Second, please let us know what you are experiencing. Talk to your professor, your advisor, your chair, a Help Desk staff member or someone if you are having difficulties. I often talk about being student-focused, and that hasn't changed—no matter where you are learning. You still have access to all Southeast offers. That includes faculty, advisors, counselors, and administrators. We're still here virtually for your learning, your questions and well-being. Don't be hesitant about reaching out to us.

Finally, I'm hopeful. The spirit of SEMO continues to lie within our community, no matter where we are. Our faculty, our staff and, especially, you, our students chose Southeast because that bold will to do spirit lies within each of us. Thank you for your support and your patience these last few weeks. We will persevere, and we will get through this challenge. We will learn and grow and evolve, and we'll do that together.

Sincerely

Dr. Carlos Vargas
President
Southeast Missouri State University