Dear Faculty and Staff:

As we are now in the middle of our first week of remote instruction—with 100 percent of our students off campus and the vast majority of employees working remotely—I want to pause for a moment to say: thank you. This has been an extraordinary couple of weeks and you have all managed it with care, dignity and professionalism—which is, of course, what I have always seen from all of you.

I hope that you, your families and friends are well at this difficult time. Of course, the question on the minds of every college and university nationwide is how they will navigate the seemingly endless challenges presented to us by the coronavirus situation. I want you to know that my Cabinet colleagues and I are working together and with our teams on a daily basis—not just to plan our day-to-day handling of this crisis, but also to continue our long-range planning for the College’s future. We are pursuing every possibility to ensure that Wells College is sustainable for all of our students, faculty, staff and alumni.

I have been in constant communication with the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU), a statewide public policy group that is one of our best direct links to NYS government officials. As this crisis has evolved, they have been working nearly nonstop to help Wells and other private colleges present a unified approach to their government representatives, so that Wells and other institutions can speak with “one voice.” In the past week, I have also personally reached out to Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and Congressional representative John Katko, to ensure that the federal stimulus package currently being finalized not only includes sufficient funding for higher education, but would also implement a funding formula that won’t put smaller colleges at a disadvantage.

We plan to host an all-campus videoconference meeting in the near future, so that we can all speak to one another and provide a time to answer any questions you may have. In the meantime, your support of our students is paramount. Please keep them connected and invested in their learning and in the College. Wells is known for its spirit of community and its commitment to individualized learning, and I am proud that all of you have helped make this unexpected transition be as successful as possible.

Many have also asked about upcoming major events. Our admissions team is working to hold spring open houses as virtual events online, starting in early April. Also, at this time, we do not yet have a decision regarding the status of Commencement; it appears likely that a return to normal will not occur by May 16, requiring Commencement either to be rescheduled or canceled. We are asking for you and our students to be patient as we consider the options available to us. It may be a few weeks before we have a final decision to share, but this is preferable to making a decision now that may
ultimately prove to be premature. **The same holds true for alumni Reunion weekend**, which is scheduled for the last weekend in May.

I promise to keep you informed in the days and weeks ahead. In the meantime, **I want you again to know how grateful I am to be part of the Wells family, and how much I appreciate your efforts.** I am saddened that you and our students have been deprived of the remainder of the spring semester on our campus, but I promise that we will all celebrate together when we are able to see each other again in person.

Jonathan Gibralter
President