

Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday the first dose of anti-COVID-19 vaccine was administered to a CUNY alumna, one of our many former and current students who have been essential workers during the pandemic. There is something profoundly appropriate in this moment of recognition and protection of those who are laboring on behalf our city, state, and world. There is something profoundly awkward and necessary in our education and mentoring of those who are working towards our safety and survival. The irony of evaluating student work and submitting grades unbalances us, does it not? In a year that has been frequently pulled off center, I want to thank you for finding your ground again and again and for holding that ground for your students as well.

We continue to shift emphasis in our professional lives between the familiarity of academic calendars and standards and the uncertainty of virtual activities and the uneven presence of nearly all of us in classes and meetings and communications. Despite the vaccine beginning distribution, these shifts will continue for much of the next year as we wait for our turn, as our students wait in environments less likely to receive doses and attention. Will you join me in taking a deep breath, taking time for yourselves, and preparing to be present?

The coming weeks offer many of us days or weeks away from our regular assignments. Clearly, we have much to face in our personal lives, and the grief many are experiencing may be intensified. And yet. Having to balance fewer obligations may be an opportunity to focus on primary needs such as shelter, sleep, food, and community. And if any of these needs are at risk, and we know they are for many, those of us better resourced can balance by giving more of our attention to sharing and assisting. There is a restorative energy in practical caring, for ourselves and for others.

As the snow embraces winter, and as we embrace hope that the pandemic will end decisively in favor of the survivors and the future, may we all embrace what matters most to us in the time we have now, and may we do this with the certain knowledge that we will embrace those whom we love with all our love before the next year ends.

Sending warmth, safety, and gratitude. You are all essential. We need your balance. We need you here.

Sincerely,

Gina