

Charging Forward

[Photo: Dr. Farmer.jpg] **1/11/21** — The new year affords new opportunities to create a bright shared future. On the heels of what was unquestionably a challenging year, what actions will we now collectively take to make 2021 as successful as possible? Will we allow the negative thinking associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to cloud our thinking, or will we cut through the negativity and allow positive thoughts to drive our success?

Throughout history pandemics changed societies. The tragic loss of life led to population decreases, labor shortages led to wage increases, and many innovations spurred economic recovery. Pandemic related market disruptions resulted in economic change and the associated economic winners and losers. The social upheavals associated with pandemics eventually led to new opportunities and growth in the middle class. Following the Black Death of the late middle ages, the Renaissance radically changed Europe for the better.

Just as Europe thoroughly rebounded from the historical pandemics of the 14th Century, Weatherford College is now dedicated to charging forward in 2021. As immunizations bring hope of an impending end to the current COVID-19 pandemic, WC is strongly positioned to support full economic recovery. Due to the hard work and generous philanthropy of the Weatherford College Foundation Board, the foundation is better equipped to financially support the retooling of the recently unemployed than ever before.

Weatherford College is also building new facilities and adding new programs. A new Workforce and Emerging Technologies Building is rising out of the ground like a beacon of opportunity. New workforce programs and new bachelor's degrees are providing our students with affordable opportunities to learn new job skills and to get back on their feet financially. The jobs that these educational programs prepare our students to assume pay family sustaining wages and support the economic development of our region.

In addition to providing students with employable credentials and skill sets, Weatherford College is also enriching the educational experience. The expansion of our arts programs is attracting amazing artists to the college. The community is enjoying rich cultural experiences like never before. The expansion of our athletics programs is creating a buzz throughout the athletic community and raising the profile of our college in the process. Our agricultural and interdisciplinary academic conferences are also gaining statewide attention. Collectively, these educational experiences are enriching the lives of both our students and our stakeholders.

Weatherford College will not go quietly into 2021. We will charge forward with renewed vigor to expand our students' educational opportunities, to support our community's economic and employment recovery, and to lead with excellence! The higher education mission of teaching, scholarship, and service is alive and well at WC. The greatest days of our college and of our community are in the future.

As we charge forward in the new year we will boldly challenge adversity and facilitate opportunity. The pandemic brought illness, unemployment, economic hardship, death, and grief, but it has not destroyed our institution or our society. Our collective will to succeed remains strong. Throughout her noble history, Weatherford College survived two world wars, the Great Depression, and countless other societal challenges. We will not only survive the current pandemic as an institution, we will thrive! We

will emerge from the pandemic a stronger, more determined institution. And yes, we will continue charging forward!

Tod Allen Farmer

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