

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Fireplace Chat with Dean Golden: Episode 1

May 15, 2020

I woke up this morning, and realized it's been two months since our world changed here in Madison and at the SMPH. I never thought phrases like "WebEx", "Zoom", and "virtual" would be used more often than "good to see you", "let's meet," or "want to go get some lunch?".

What I miss, more than I would have imagined, are the little things.....my very frequent walks back and forth to the Hospital, with the sense of energy you feel in the HSLC atrium coming from our students, the unplanned "stop and chats" with colleagues and friends.

Counterbalancing these lost-for-the-moment little pleasures are some very powerful positive experiences. Every day I am in awe of the bravery and dedication of our clinicians and our clinical staff who are on the front lines. I am profoundly impressed with the resilience of our students, who made the proverbial lemonade out of the lemons thrown at them by COVID in creating a strong sense of community for their match day and graduation events. So many of our staff have found innovative ways to advance our missions while following the best public health practices. And our administrators, in the school, and university, and at UW Health, have shown remarkable leadership and self-sacrifice. THANK YOU, to all of you, for all you are doing.

I want to share with you a few lessons that I've learned so far....you probably figured out these things before I did, but in case you haven't, I hope this will be helpful.

1. This will be a marathon, not a sprint....So pace yourself. I initially kept at it seven days a week, morning through night. I now make a concerted effort to make some of the weekend seem like a weekend....and to unplug for a little while each evening.
2. Exercise, always a good idea, is essential during this stressful period.
3. Weekly grocery shopping goes a lot faster if you do it at 6:00 am.
4. Avoid giving yourself a haircut right before a virtual public event....unless it's an event where you get to wear a cap to hide your butchery.

So here's the main point. Each morning when I wake up, I walk right up to a large window that separates me from a truly beautiful Wisconsin scene. If I stare at what is there in front of me, all that I see, is literally a pane. But if I take the long view, and focus not on the glass pane in front of me, but rather what is out there, on the horizon, then a wonderfully inspiring vision unfolds.

So let's remind ourselves, each day, to look beyond what is immediately in front of us. We will come out of this stronger, wiser, and with a more profound appreciation for the big picture that lies ahead.

I really look forward to having that stop and chat with you in the atrium sometime in the near future. In the meantime, take care of yourself, and thank you for all that you are doing.