

Dear MATC Membership,

Well-being, trauma, and burnout are subjects that far too few of our institutions are navigating well as we continue to maneuver our way through the pandemic. Instead, many institutions have raised teaching expectations with hybrid and online courses and amplified service demands. Unsurprisingly, this work is disproportionately falling on faculty and artists that are already un- or under-represented within their institutions because of their racial, sexual, or gender identities. The challenges are even more daunting when we consider the precarious environment now facing graduate students and independent scholars and artists. As we crawl our way to the finish line of this semester, we see an even more challenging spring semester just beyond the horizon. For many of us, it will be a spring semester with no breaks and little support. Something has to give.

For the past month, a small virtual special meeting planning committee, under the brilliant leadership of La Donna Forsgren, has been convening in various smaller sub-committees dedicated to figuring out the logistics of a March virtual convening. We have begun some amazing work on matters critical to MATC's future including racial justice and long overdue structural changes. We now know some of the tasks necessary to start this work, the labor required to organize the logistics, the time needed to make this all happen, and the costs of doing it well.

We also have a much better sense of where we are as educators, scholars, and practitioners in two fields that are suffering terribly amidst this pandemic: higher education and the theatre. We've decided that we must attend to our values--to focus on helping sustain our community and our humanity. Twin to this is recognizing the importance--and cost--of *all* of our labor. As such, we have adjusted our plans:

- Hold a greatly scaled-back, FREE, virtual convening that includes ONE curated session on Mental Health and Well-being followed by a Zoom Happy Hour. We want to provide our membership with an opportunity to reconnect—albeit virtually—with one another as is our tradition in early March. We are choosing to do LESS in this moment, not more.
- Table--*temporarily*--the exciting work that has begun by the planning committee until we are past the Spring 2021 semester. Then, we will restart that work, with a renewed call for our members to help us envision a Revolution in our field and our organization. As we all know, these conversations are critical to the survival and health of our organization and the sustainability of our field. And with the good news about vaccines, it is looking more likely that we will be able to have these conversations *in person* in 2022. Imagine how much stronger those conversations will be if we have adequate time and labor to scaffold them AND a chance to encounter one another face to face.

- Create a Mighty Networks organizational site that will allow members to communicate year-round with MATC friends and colleagues. We envision this platform as a means to reinforce the strength of our community beyond our annual conference.

This will be a very different year for MATC, just like 2020 has been a different year for all of us in so many ways. We'll announce more details on these sessions and the MATC Mighty Network early in 2021 and we hope many of you will be able to join us as we revisit our humanity and mental well-being together.

Sincerely,

Chris Woodworth, President

Shawna Mefferd Kelty, President-Elect

La Donna L. Forsgren, Conference Planner

Shannon Walsh, Associate Conference Planner

Sarah Campbell, Secretary

Brian Cook, Treasurer

Travis Stern, Webmaster

Beth Osborne, Immediate-Past President