

## DAC: Connecting to the Future

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on behalf of

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Hi--We're writing to the Digital Arts and Culture community to thank you. Whether you're a student, teacher, researcher, or administrator, you're receiving this message because we're grateful for your past, continued, and future involvement with the program. Your contributions to DAC, the practices and studies of the intersecting fields of information, arts, and media--of technology and culture--are as significant now as they have ever been. Don't worry, we're not here asking for money, only to drop a little bit of encouragement and virtual pats on the back.

First, this is has become an unsettling, unprecedented, and uncertain time. Most of us wouldn't have imagined such a scenario and even if we did, hard to predict the timing and the speed with which the situation overtook our lives. However, if we understood anything about the first two decades of the 21st century it is that we could have predicted that there were to be more rapid shifts involving technology and society.

This is what DAC has been aiming for, to quote from our FAQ page: "to recognize that adaptation is a necessity for the society of the future. DAC equips students with an advantage to understand the social, political, and economic systems that are at work reorganizing how we work, play, and live." Well, the future is here, again, and it will keep on keeping on.

The facts and the reality are that we will not be returning to face to face instruction for the rest of the semester. This is one of many changes, and there's no denying that it's reasonable for some people to experience this as a kind of loss, but we are also gaining something else that I want to emphasize: The opportunity to act to create, arrange, expand, and reconfigure our social structures. Not only that but we—you and I—get to imbue the new tools with the values of our choosing. We are responsible for making the new culture that comes next and we get to make that together.

Think about what our school and world will look like after this pandemic crisis. It's a thought experiment that's no longer just an exercise in speculative fiction but pertinent to our lives in the most consequential ways. This is what we've been training for: We're developing our understanding; we've got the skills; we have the technology. To quote our colleague and current DAC 661 Digital Engagement Capstone instructor Kristopher Purzycki, this sort of situation is precisely what DAC has been designed for: "occupational resilience, professional development, and flexibility."

In the classroom on Thursday before spring break, faced with not knowing if this would be our last meeting, my students and I discussed possible scenarios for finishing the

second half of the course after the break. We planned for contingencies, in whatever form, face to face or online, underscoring our purpose. It's to tell our stories, express our concerns, permeate meaningful discussion through these digital artifacts that we're creating. We are re-affirming our human values of connection, kindness, and empathy using our tools of creativity and resilience. New paradigms? Rapid shifts? Challenge accepted!

As we move through this change in the world, at home, work, and school and as our DAC community moves into a new phase with the DAC Major—the BA in Digital Arts and Culture, I'm looking forward to our continued interactions. Please don't hesitate to reach out with suggestions or requests. Your items for the DAC Digest, ideas for the curriculum or programming, including courses and experiences, or other partnerships or collaborations are all welcome and valued!

Marc Tasman, DAC Director

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Yours,  
Marc.

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