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STORIES OF RESILIENCE

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How do you define resilience? Do you tend to think of it as an individual personality trait? Maybe words like strength, persistence, and endurance come to mind. Have you thought about what the concept of resilience would look like on a larger scale? At an organizational, community, or systems level? What would it look like for Concordia to be resilient?

Over the past two years, I and many other Concordia faculty and staff have been exploring the idea of resilience in relation to Concordia College. We were led to do this by our commitment to develop a plan to increase Concordia's resilience to the impacts of climate change, which will be part of the college's first-ever Climate Action Plan. We have looked at what strengths Concordia has when it comes to dealing with crises and in what areas we have potential to grow. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of resilience while presenting the perfect opportunity to reflect on what we are learning about resilience as we live out the turmoil of crisis in real time.

To understand how we at Concordia are trying to be resilient in the face of challenges, I interviewed 19 individuals who serve in a variety of roles across the college. The goal of these interviews was to guide each individual in reflecting on how COVID-19 has affected them on an individual level, and then to broaden that reflection to include thoughts about Concordia and the future in light of recent events. I sought to understand the challenges each person faced, the sparks of good that popped up in their experiences, and the lessons that they will carry into the future.

As I conducted the interviews, I quickly realized that each story had a theme. Some were personal, others more universal, but all were vital to painting a picture of Concordia's resilience. The result, a beautiful story of how the Concordia community was broken, built up, and ultimately bound together by this extraordinary experience.

“Resilience is the ability of a system or community to survive disruption and to anticipate, adapt, and flourish in the face of change.”

(Definition of resilience from the organization Second Nature)



Connection is Key

Interview with Amy Watkin, Director of First-Year Experience and Associate Professor of English

When COVID-19 shifted Amy Watkin's classes from the classroom to online, the greatest challenge for her wasn't figuring out the technology, but figuring out how to maintain meaningful connections with her students. She feared that students would limit their contact with her due to concerns that she was too busy. "[The challenge] was trying to make sure that I was staying connected and that students felt welcome, and seen and encouraged, and that they knew that I was going to be there even if I wasn't physically around for them to drop in on if they needed to talk," Amy reflected.

Typical Doesn't Exist

Interview with Mike Vandenberg, Director of Recruitment

Mike Vandenberg, Concordia's Director of Recruitment, began his interview by pointing out that the work he and his team are doing has not changed – only the means by which it happens. In-person events have gone virtual and the admissions team is working from home, but they are still working hard to bring in the new class. However, this period has been challenging for admissions staff as students and parents ask questions that do not have easy answers. To counterbalance this feeling of unknown, Mike has had to rely on his skills in empathy. "[I have] a good sensitivity to know how others are feeling," Mike reflected, "and try to approach those situations in whatever unique context they require based on who's bring what concern or emotion."

As the conversation continued, Mike explained that, although these past few months have left many things up in the air, the admissions team is uniquely equipped to work through this uncertainty. "The typical year doesn't exist

Additionally, Amy spoke about how the pandemic revealed what is truly important in her work. It exposed what assignments were most valuable and that honesty and connection are key. "We don't know a student's personal situation", Amy remarked, "There is really nothing about any particular assignment that is more important than what a student is personally going through." As she reflected on resilience in particular Amy added, "Resilience looks different for everybody [...] I think that perspective, and thinking about how people cope has been really eye opening and important." As we look forward to the future of Concordia, it will be important to continue to reflect on how the pandemic has affected, and continues to affect, each individual, and how that in turn affects our community.

"There is really nothing about any particular assignment that is more important than what a student is personally going through."
- Amy Watkin

for us," Mike explained, "we don't know what apps we're going to get - 17 and 18 year olds sometimes behave in ways [...] that don't seem to make sense [...] We have had to learn to be flexible and nimble in the context of higher ed., which isn't normally either of those things." This flexibility has been vital to the success of admissions work and will continue to be into the future. "We've learned that what we were used to in terms of how to recruit a new student and bring in a class needs to change. I don't think any of us are under any sort of illusion that when this is over, whenever that comes, that we just go back to how we were doing it before. Things are going to be different," Mike expressed. This mindset of looking forward and realizing that change is necessary and good will aid in propelling Concordia into this new future.

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Fighting Fear

Interview with Karla Knutson, Associate Professor of English and Co-Director of Women's and Gender Studies

For Karla Knutson, COVID-19 and the shift to working from home brought both challenges and benefits. Karla found herself missing in-person interactions as her work shifted to virtual meetings and email communication. In addition, she had to manage the logistics of working from home while caring for her 5-year-old daughter. Karla credited her skills in organization and scheduling for how she was able to remain productive and focused amidst all the changes, and Karla found joy in being able to spend more time at home with her daughter.

Throughout the conversation, Karla spoke highly of the staff and administration at Concordia, and of their support via technology assistance, library resources, and effective



communication. "I feel grateful to be part of a community that has really cared and thought about how we might all be feeling, and our fears, and our concerns [...] I felt supported, and I think less fearful, because I knew people are thinking about things very carefully," Karla reflected. Looking forward Karla hopes that this experience will open our minds to considering what others are going through, and that as a community we will be empathetic towards other's experiences.

Shared Values

Interview with Mikal Kenfield, Assistant Dean of Students and the Director of Residence Life

To say that COVID-19 changed the work of Residence Life at Concordia is an understatement. "What is the work of Residence Life when most of the students are no longer living on campus?" said Mikal Kenfield, Assistant Dean of Students and the Director of Residence Life, "And it didn't mean that there wasn't work, it meant there was more work, different work." The mission of the Res Life team shifted from making sure students have a place to live on campus, to making sure they have a safe home off campus and that they feel supported if they need to remain on campus. In order to do this they had to front difficult questions, respond to unique requests, and decide how to meet the needs and desires of individuals while caring for the safety of the entire Concordia community.

"I felt supported, and I think less fearful, because I knew people are thinking about things very carefully."

- Karla Knutson

"Our department is really good at remembering that it is about the student experience, that they are the reason we exist."

- Mikal Kenfield

Despite these challenges, Mikal was grateful for the Res Life team and how they put the needs of students first. "In general our department [...] is really good at remembering that it is about the student experience, that they are the reason we exist," she said. Additionally, Mikal expressed her appreciation for the ability of the whole Concordia community to be nimble and pivot quickly to meet the most critical needs. "Everyone just wanted to do what was best for students, and we didn't get caught up in details," Mikal reflected. She explained that part of what made Concordia successful during this time is the shared values of the college and a mission that we could all work toward. As we look toward the next couple of months and years, continuing to work toward these shared values will be vital to Concordia's success.

The Power of People

Interview with Amy Kelly, College Communications and Media Relations Director

Have you ever thought about who writes the Concordia emails that you receive regarding updates on COVID-19? Well, the person who has taken on a bulk of that task is Concordia's Communications and Media Relations Director, Amy Kelly. When crisis struck, Amy's work shifted dramatically, both in content and in means. Amy explained that as she began working off campus she missed the ability to easily connect and empathize with others. "You get so much empathy when you sit with people and dwell with them and you figure out what the next steps are [...] When you can't do that any longer, you sometimes disembodify folks, and that's really not good for what our work is," she explained. In a job where properly conveying information and emotion is vital, Amy expressed a deep longing to be able to interact with people face-to-face once again.

Despite these challenges, Amy shared two key reasons she has been able to continue to do her job successfully: one, her skills and experience in communication, and two, the people of

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- Amy Kelly

Concordia. Amy voiced her amazement in the way her colleagues have utilized their positions, resources, and skills to help Concordia move forward successfully. "I have amazing colleagues," Amy reflected, "I have people around me [...] that pull together, they do what they need to do to get the work done. They care so much about the institution. I am amazed by the beauty of the folks around me." It is the skilled and caring people of Concordia that have kept this institution strong through these trying times, and will continue to push it forward into what comes next.

Beyond the Obvious

Interview with Michelle Lelwica, Professor of Religion

Michelle Lelwica has always seen academic learning as an opportunity to cultivate personal growth and social responsibility. When COVID-19 struck, Michelle saw this approach become even more powerful as the pandemic provided an opportunity to explore those topics more pragmatically. "[It's] an opportunity to help students turn inward and ask themselves, 'how am I going to use this situation to grow and not just be defeated by the disappointments,' and then also ask, 'what is my obligation to others,'" she explained. Michelle also appreciated that the uncertainty of the time provided an opportunity to be creative, think about new possibilities, and appreciate the things we usually take for granted.

"We can use COVID-19 to make more intentional decisions about how we live and how we want to relate to others."

- Michelle Lelwica

As Michelle reflected on how this situation impacted her understanding of resilience, she emphasized the need to grow through this situation. "I would like to redefine resilience more in terms of what we can grow into, rather than what we can bounce back to," she reflected. She went on to emphasize the idea of mindfulness and its importance in her life as she navigated these uncertain times. "[I learned] to not take the ordinary for granted," she said, "We can use COVID-19 to make more intentional decisions about how we live and how we want to relate to others [...] and take care of each other and take care of the earth." As Concordia looks forward, into a new phase of the college's future, we can practice resilience by recognizing the things we value about this place, and using that to build toward a better future.



"Being adaptable doesn't just mean incorporating something new, but also reshaping how you do everything."

- Tim Hiller

Creative Solutions

Interview with Tim Hiller, Coordinator of Community Engagement

What does it look like to continue community engagement when students are no longer on campus and are confined to their homes? That is a great question, and one that Tim Hiller, Concordia's Community Engagement Coordinator, has faced as he has worked from home the past couple months.

Two main challenges arose for Tim as his work shifted off campus. One was shifting the content of his work to align with the new reality of COVID-19 and the second was finding balance between work and home responsibilities. Despite these challenges, Tim was able to continue moving forward community engagement initiatives and PEAK in unique ways. One example of this was using the pandemic, and the learning opportunities that arose because of it, to develop a new PEAK. "We've been able to think through what are the things we need to get done, what do we need to accomplish them, and we have been able to come up with some creative solutions," Tim reflected. He attributes this creativity to the development of strong and collaborative partnerships with colleagues. "Collaboration and creating new ideas can go a long way," he pointed out.

As Tim shifted his reflection to resilience more specifically, he emphasized the need to be willing to shift and change. "Being adaptable doesn't just mean incorporating something new, but also reshaping how you do everything or reshaping your expectations," Tim explained, "Skills that you didn't know you had can also come into the fore." Ultimately, Tim pointed out that this time has given us an opportunity to rethink what it means to succeed, which is an opportunity we should take full advantage of.

Pragmatic Problem Solving

Interview with Dallas Fossum, Director of Facilities Management

Facilities Management is a problem solving division. For them, each day holds its own set of challenges, but COVID-19 presented the facilities team with a challenge unlike any they have faced before. While many college employees transitioned their work off campus, much of the facilities team remained on site, working hard to keep the operations of the college running smoothly. For Dallas, the Facilities Director, this often meant overseeing his team from afar while a majority of his time was spent working from his home in Fergus Falls, MN. Clear communication, flexibility, and bringing a sense of calm to situations became very important elements of Dallas' work. Even amidst the many challenges COVID-19 created, Facilities Management was able to take advantage of a quiet, less populated campus, and accomplish projects that may have been difficult to do otherwise.

For Dallas, the term resilience is not new, but this experience has definitely reinforced the need for it. "I have experienced many emergency management type situations, but this one is definitely a new one. I have learned how to solve problems in a long, long ongoing emergency management situation," Dallas explained. Dallas emphasized the need to be calm in order to help others who might be feeling panicked, "when people start getting into a panic mode I help break it down, take it step-by-step, and help people work through it." It has been this ability to be pragmatic and make intentional yet flexible decisions that has helped both Dallas and our college community be successful through this time.

"When people start getting into a panic mode I help break it down, take it step-by-step, and help people work through it."

- Dallas Fossum

Focus on Flexibility

Interview with Susanna Lu, Assistant Director of International Community

As the world began shutting down due to COVID-19, the Global Learning office kicked into high gear to ensure both students abroad and international students at Concordia were safe and supported. Susanna Lu, Assistant Director of International Community, was a key individual in making sure that students were aware of, and able to access, the resources that they needed. Susanna explained that the biggest change for her work has been navigating new ways of communicating with students. "I do a lot of outreach to [international students] and it tends to be on a one-on-one basis, so we are being very creative about getting their attention," Susanna explained, "The biggest change

"It's not about getting all the right answers right away but preparing for different scenarios."

- Susanna Lu

is how we get our message out and how we keep the connection even though we are apart." To help maintain this connection, Susanna and others have created groups on social media to create a less formal means of communicating with students.

Susanna explained that handling emergencies is not new for the Global Learning office, but that COVID-19 did present a unique challenge in the scope of its impact. "A big challenge has been keeping up with all the changes and how different countries and law enforcement are reacting to [COVID-19], so that we can react to it and message our students accordingly," Susanna explained. When facing a challenge like this, Susanna was quick to point out the need for flexibility. "A situation like this pandemic is very fluid, so we don't know what might happen," Susanna explained, "It's not about getting all the right answers right away but preparing for different scenarios." It is openness and flexibility that will enable our community to adjust to whatever comes next.

Good Will

Interview with Edward Antonio, Chief Diversity Officer and Professor of Humanities

Over the past few months it has been harder than ever to maintain connections with others. However, it is also during difficult times like these that people desire to come together and support one another. For Edward Antonio, this contradiction has been front of mind. One of the greatest challenges he has faced is feeling disconnected from family, friends and colleagues. He is saddened by the loss of day-to-day interactions such as chatting over coffee or having a quick conversation while passing a colleague in the hallway. Despite this loss of face-to-face interaction, Edward was encouraged and excited about the ways that Concordia has been able to stay connected during this time. "The people of Concordia are full of good will," Edward emphasized in reference to seeing the Concordia community continue to support one another despite the physical distance between them.

In terms of diversity related work at Concordia, Edward has continued to see Concordia's support. "There is an openness,"

he said, "people have stepped forward and said this too is important, this too is critical." Ultimately, Edward ended his interview by talking about the importance of humility when navigating through a crisis, "humility to ask for help, humility to acknowledge how we are dependent on each other," he explained. It is humility and the ability to ask others for help that will enable Concordia to stay strong through these difficult times.

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- Edward Antonio

Grace for the Unknown

Interview with Heidi Rogers, Assistant Director of Retention and Learning Services

For Heidi Rogers, and her colleagues working at the Center for Student Success, the basic structure and function of their work has not changed, but some of the issues they are addressing have. As students moved off campus and into various new living situations, the inequalities that have always been there become more apparent. "When the students got home, not everyone could still be a full time student," Heidi explained. When Heidi's meetings with students shifted to online she felt like there was a giant chasm between her and the student. After their 20 minute conversation the student would go back to their difficult circumstances. "It felt like they didn't have a chance and it wasn't their fault," Heidi remarked, "It all felt like a Band-Aid on a gaping wound."

"We have a lot of evidence that, yes, we can undertake dramatic change in a short amount of time and be okay."

- Kirsten Theye

Magnified Mission

Interview with Kirsten Theye, Associate Professor of Communication Studies and Program Director of Social Activism

It was clear throughout her interview that Kirsten Theye, a faculty member in the Communication Studies department, was choosing her words carefully, wanting to reflect her experience accurately. As she reflected on how her work has changed due to COVID-19, she thoughtfully responded, "The medium through which I work has changed, but my work hasn't changed, my work is still [...] trying to help the college live out it's mission [...] So no it hasn't [changed]." With the change of how the work was done, there were challenges however. Kirsten missed coincidental meetings with colleagues and students, and the creativity and spontaneity that those unplanned meetings sparked.

Looking more closely at how Concordia has adapted to these new challenges, Kirsten pointed out that through this experience we have gained proof that we can do extremely

"Have a lot of grace for people and their circumstances [...] give people the benefit of the doubt."

- Heidi Rogers

As someone who craves structure and knowing the answer to student's questions, living in this season of unknown was difficult for Heidi. Despite that, she found comfort in the idea that COVID-19 provided an opportunity to rethink methods, process, and motivation. Heidi also found comfort in the fact that she was still able to support students even though the content of the work had changed. Additionally, the students she was working with continued to show incredible resilience and Heidi was able to learn from this and to practice grace. Her takeaway: "Have a lot of grace for people and their circumstances [...] give people the benefit of the doubt."

difficult things. "We have a lot of evidence that, yes, we can undertake dramatic change in a short amount of time and be okay," she expressed. As the interview shifted into a conversation more specifically about resilience, Kirsten voiced that this experience has exemplified her understanding of what resilience is. "When I think about resilience I think about situations and context and stressors, conflict, all of that can change, but the underlying values don't change [...] This is a tremendous time for Concordia [...] but a resilient institution will continue to make decisions in a way that represents their values, and will hopefully come out of it stronger on the other side."



Listen Well

Interview with Julie Maahs, Career Counselor

As a career counselor, Julie Maahs spends much of her time meeting with students. Since COVID-19, her meetings have gone virtual, making it more difficult to make meaningful connections with students. In addition, the topics of her conversations have become more emotionally difficult. "One big challenge is not getting too invested in the lives of students [...] If you get too involved and invested in students' problems you won't be able to be a logical sounding board for them," Julie remarked. She explained that this can lead to trying to solve students' problems for them, rather than empowering them to solve their own problems. The result of that is outcomes that are not beneficial for the student. Knowing this, Julie has been mindful of how she engages in difficult conversations with students.

Mission Focused

Martin Graefe, Senior Group Director at Concordia Language Villages

This spring and summer, the usual programming at Concordia Language Villages (CLV) was completely upturned due to COVID-19. Martin Graefe explained that he and the rest of the CLV team have spent a lot of time in meetings to determine how to maintain high-caliber language experiences without having guests on site. Martin explained that a major challenge has been the rapid pace at which guidance and information regarding COVID-19 is changing. There is little time to think or focus, while the need to work from home adds an additional layer of difficulty. "The actual work of what we are trying to accomplish now is figuring out what Concordia Language Villages looks like online and how we convert what we talk about being the CLV way of language education into an online module. Essentially we are building a business and educational concept on the fly," Martin explained.

"You shouldn't hold on to things just because they have always been that way."

- Martin Graefe



As the conversation continued, Julie emphasized that it has been vital for her to listen to her own needs during this time as well. "I think [coronavirus] has made it easier to see what's really important and know what I want to prioritize," Julie commented. When asked about resilience specifically, Julie reflected, "I don't think I had thought about [resilience involving] flexibility and creativity in how to handle things, or the idea of grounding and knowing what is most important to you, and how that helps you keep going forward." It is these skills that Julie will carry with her past this experience.

"I think [coronavirus] has made it easier to see what's really important and to know what I want to prioritize."

- Julie Maahs

Amidst these changes and challenges, Martin has been encouraged by the way the CLV team is working collaboratively and effectively by keeping their mission in focus. When asked what skills it has taken for the team to be effective during this time, Martin said, "Creativity, the sense of community, which then establishes a level of trust and confidence in the abilities and intent of others, the problem solving skills as well, and the passion people bring to the villages [...] It is a caring group of people." Looking forward, Martin emphasized the need to be open to change. "You shouldn't hold on to things just because they have always been that way," Martin pointed out. This willingness to change is vital to creating a more resilient community.

Rethinking the Norm

Interview with Steph Ahlfeldt, Associate Dean of the College and Professor of Communication Studies

For Steph Ahlfeldt, the typical summer schedule of professional development activities and fall preparations has changed quite dramatically. She explained it as having to do everything through a “coronavirus lens.” Both the amount of work Steph has needed to accomplish, and the speed at which it needs to be completed, has increased. In many cases, things that were already finished and set for the next academic year have needed to be redone.

Through it all, Steph has found joy in her work and has appreciated being able to use her skills in communication to help the college navigate these difficult times. Even amidst the challenges, Steph easily identified the positive results of this experience. “COVID has forced us to make changes that we probably, in some cases, needed to make anyway - think about systems differently, think about processes differently,” Steph reflected, “Some of it is showing us the possibility of doing things differently, and that, I think, might put us in a

“Some of it is showing us the possibility of doing things differently, and that, I think, might put us in a better place long term.”

- Steph Ahlfeldt

better place long term.” As the interview was coming to an end, Steph shared a little about her heart for moving forward well, and for ensuring that the positive changes that come from this time are carried into the future. “Whatever our lives look like as we transition [...] there are pieces of this that I don’t want to lose. There are things that have been very clearly revealed to me that I don’t want to ignore,” Steph explained, “I want to make sure that even as I do my work, which I love, that I can maintain some perspective on other things that matter to me, that I love.”

Consider Your Resources

Interview with Michelle Marko, Associate Professor of Biology

Biology, the study of life and living organisms, tends to be a very hands on field of study. For Michelle Marko, a faculty member in the Biology Department, this made the shift to online learning difficult. “We tend to shy away from online learning in the natural sciences because so much of what we do involves hands on learning. When you are looking at an organism, or dissecting an organism, sure there are images that can help you see it, but it’s the act of seeing it that is so very valuable,” Michelle explained. In addition, the switch to online learning came with challenges around assessment, research, and interaction with students and colleagues in general.

Despite these challenges, Michelle was quick to point out her appreciation for the ways that COVID-19 has required her to slow down and live more sustainably. “Although there is not more time, it is a different time.

“When I think about resilience, and our ability to respond, I am inspired by how quickly those changes really can be made, and how much we are willing to do.”

- Michelle Marko

It is a time to slow down and consider your needs and resources.” Reflecting more specifically on Concordia and the resilience of the college during this time, Michelle emphasized the feeling that we are all in this together, and that together we have been able to quickly adapt and change. “When I think about resilience, and our ability to respond, I am inspired by how quickly those changes really can be made, and how much we are willing to do,” Michelle explained. During this time, we have an opportunity to make swift, intentional change that will propel Concordia forward.

What Matters Most

Interview with Nat Dickey, Department Chair of Music and Associate Professor of Low Brass

Nat Dicky was somewhat surprised at how well certain aspects of his work translated to online platforms. For example, he was able to continue doing one-on-one lessons with students and his work as a department chair remained relatively the same, despite changes to the content of the work. Ensemble work, however, was almost completely halted with the shift to online learning. Instead, Nat explained that his work with his ensemble became much more about maintaining a sense of community. "The one thing that we were able to do was zoom meetings to provide support, a sense of connection, and keep in touch with [the students]," he remarked.

As the conversation shifted to the topic of Concordia's strengths and resilience, Nat pointed out his appreciation for the support of the Concordia community. He spoke of drawing inspiration from the passion and joy of students, colleagues, and campus leaders. "From my perspective, when I watch our campus leaders, they seem so real, so human. I feel like there is a lot of wisdom, but also a lot of humility," he

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- Nat Dickey

reflected, "I hope through all of [what comes next], that we will be reminded of what matters most to us, and be able to hold on to those things even when the distractions start to come back." He explained that openness, a clear focus on the college mission, and a desire to keep everyone safe, is what is enabling the college to push through these times.

"If we ask students what they need and what they are feeling we need to be ready to provide support."

- Nathalie Rinehardt

Team Effort

Interview with Nathalie Rinehardt, Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Student Engagement

"I looked around the table at the Emergency Response Team, and I said, 'it feels like we are in the greatest team builder activity ever'," said Nathalie Rinehardt as she reflected on her experience over the past few months. When the COVID-19 crisis began, Nathalie's work completely shifted. Much of her day-to-day responsibilities transitioned to other staff members as she shifted to dedicating her time to serving on ERT and ensuring that students' needs were met. One of her biggest challenges in this was accurately communicating information to students and others at the college. "The biggest challenge has been helping [students] understand the gravity of the situation without being dramatic [...] You need to have a cool, level head, but you need to find other ways to demonstrate the urgency to people," Nathalie explained.

Nathalie has been able to rely on many of her own skills, as well as the abilities of others to find success during this time. She explained that her interest in reading has helped her stay up to date on COVID-19 related information, and her knowledge of processes and people across campus has helped her move plans and ideas forward quickly. Through it all, she has seen the Concordia community come together to support students, and the students have shown great resilience and flexibility. For Nathalie her biggest take away from this experience has been a reinforcement of our need to support students. "If we ask students what they need and what they are feeling we need to be ready to provide support," Nathalie explained, "We need to trust students. Their reality is their reality, and if they trust us enough to tell us something we need to be able to respond to them."



This is Resilience

Interview with Jill Abbot, Deputy to the President

"Initially my response is it's changed everything," Jill Abbot, Deputy to the President, responded when asked how COVID-19 has affected her work. Quickly, however, she added, "But the thing that it hasn't changed is the mission of the college (...) and the incredible team spirit that is present at Concordia." After leaving Concordia to work from home Jill quickly began to miss the spontaneity of building relationships on campus. Conversations about the last big snow storm, or the turkeys flocking around Lorentzsen were no longer topics of

"The thing that [COVID-19] hasn't changed is the mission of the college [...] and the incredible team spirit that is present at Concordia"

- Jill Abbot

conversation. Despite this loss of in-person connection, Jill was glad that she was able to lean on her communication skills to ensure Concordia was able to continue pursuing its mission.

Amidst the challenges that COVID-19 presented, Jill was grateful to work in an office and alongside colleagues that are passionate about their work. "President Craft cares deeply about people," Jill said, "he doesn't ever set that aside." She also appreciated their ability to laugh and press on when things don't go as planned. "It can be an opportunity to say, 'okay that didn't go as planned. Let's try again, or let's adjust,'" Jill remarked. As the conversation shifted more specifically to the idea of resilience Jill reflected that this experience has made the idea of community resilience much more real to her. "When your entire college, community, state, world, is going through something at the same time it is just so striking. Actually, the work that we are doing right now is resilience," she reflected. It is through the combined goal of keeping our Concordia community strong and working toward our mission that is enabling us to press on through this difficult time.

I hope that by reading and reflecting on these stories you have gained a better understanding of what community resilience looks like. Even more importantly, I hope these stories have painted a picture of how the Concordia community has been practicing resilience and how we can continue to do so as we enter this next academic year and beyond.

Resilience is a process of continual learning, adaptation, and growth. Each individual has experienced and navigated the COVID-19 crisis in a different way. As a result, each person has unique insights and lessons of resilience to bring to the table. Through the process of sharing our stories, applying what we are learning, and welcoming change and growth, we will become a more resilient Concordia.

(Thank you to all who participated in interviews for this project. Thank you for being open and honest about your experience. Your stories are insightful and inspiring.)

