

Farewell Email to My Students

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September 2021

29 July 2013

Dear Finance 330 students:

Unbeknownst to you and until about halfway into this course, to me as well, you are now part of history, my history.

After 143 consecutive terms overseas (with one term off for cardiac bypass surgery), this is my last class as a full-time faculty member with UMUC. The details are not relevant, but I have been, shall we say, "involuntarily" retired from my full-time teaching position. No, it has nothing to do with my performance or my age and I did not get into any kind of trouble or post anything inappropriate on YouTube. (LOL).

Yes, I am old enough to retire but the word "retirement" has never been part of my vocabulary. I had planned to continue teaching until I was no longer capable, so, do not congratulate me on my retirement. It is not, like it is for many, a joyous occasion.

It is a rather emotional time for me because UMUC students, thousands of them like you, have been such an integral part of my life for the last 29 years and I will very much miss playing a role (albeit a small one) in your quest for personal and professional development.

I recognize that this is one hell of a tough way to pursue a degree. When I decided to go back to school at age 27 after my military service and five years of work in business, I had to decide whether I was going to try it on a part-time basis, taking a course or two a term for umpteen years, or to quit working completely, become a full-time student, and get it done. At age 18, I completed one year of college with a .90 GPA (yes, that's right, slightly less than a D average). I had a long way to go.

I just did not think that I could do justice to a full-time job and university classes at the same time. So, I made what I believe was the second-best decision of my life, to quit work and go back to being a full-time student, on a college campus. The first (best decision) was marrying my wife of 27 years.

Fortunately, I had some VA benefits (nothing compared to the VA benefits available today) and knew I would not have to buy any clothes for a while. I had a great wardrobe made up of lots of suits, slacks, and sport coats since I had been working as a salesperson for the previous five years. In fact, I really looked out of place on the campuses in the late 60's and early 70's when tie-dyed hippie style clothing was the

rage. Half the time when I walked into a classroom the other students thought I was the instructor!

I did do some part-time work while going to school, loading vegetables on trucks at a farmer's cooperative in Homestead, Florida, for minimum wage, and working in a pool hall, to make some lunch money, but nothing to tax my brain.

For most of you, it is quite different. Many have full-time jobs, military or civilian, family and community responsibilities and must find time (often in the middle of the night) to squeeze in your studies. You have my utmost respect for doing this the "hard way". I know I could not do it and stay focused.

Over the years I have been criticized by a few, and lauded by others, for being a demanding professor and on occasion, being a bit sarcastic and "insensitive". If I offended any of you that way, I apologize. I have always taken my work (not myself) seriously and believed that maintaining high standards was the right way to go. I know that for some, this course was a real challenge, a tough struggle. To quote philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, "What doesn't kill you will make you stronger". I hope that is true in this situation.

So, while I would like to personally thank all the students I have had in all my classes over the years, that is not possible. You get to be the proxies for all of them.

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving those who serve and those who support those who serve. It has been fun! And thank you for the kind comments that some of you have posted about this course.

Perhaps this is not the last time we will "see" each other. I may return as an adjunct (part-time) professor and occasionally teach a class. Then maybe once again, the first thing I will do each morning after getting my coffee and each night before going to sleep, is turn on the computer and check into my "classroom".

Very sincerely,

Aaron

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Asian Division – January 1985 – July 1987
European Division – August 1987 – July 2013