

February 5, 2021

From:

Dr. Anne Balsamo  
Dean, School of Arts, Technology and Emerging Communication  
University of Texas at Dallas

To: HASTAC Steering Committee

RE: Formal notice of cancellation of University of Texas hosted HASTAC Annual Conference

Dear HASTAC Colleagues:

I write on behalf of the School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication to pass along the disappointing decision that we will not be able to host an HASTAC annual conference in the near future.

Working closely with the HASTAC Leadership Committee, my colleagues on the ATEC Programming Committee spent several months planning HASTAC 2020 that was to be hosted here in Dallas in October of last year. By January 2020, we had received acceptances from 9 keynote speakers! The call-for-papers was almost finished. Meeting rooms had been reserved, meal plans were costed out, and hotel logistics were almost finalized. Looking through my in-box, I note that one of my last memos to our plenary speakers was dated April 1, 2020. In that memo, I mentioned that we are monitoring “the public health” situation, and that we were proceeding with the plan to announce the Plenary Schedule very soon.

Of course, you all know what happened over the months of April and May. On May 20<sup>th</sup> I wrote again to our featured speakers to let them know that the 2020 HASTAC Conference at UTD had been postponed:

*As you know, the theme of the 2020 conference, Hindsight • Foresight • Insight provided a prompt to reflect, reassess, and anticipate what to do next. Many months later, as we are all trying to make sense of how our worlds have changed during this pandemic, we know these provocations are still important for us as scholars, teachers, and activists. And we also realize when we gather for the conference in the future there may be different questions pressing on us that require our attention.*

*I'm disappointed that we won't have the opportunity this year to host you here at the School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication. But I look forward to the time when we will gather again.*

While I hold still to the sentiment of “looking forward to the time when we will gather again,” it is unlikely that we will be able to host the Conference here in Dallas in the near future. In addition to the uncertainties regarding personal health and travel logistics, we at UTD are also facing significant budget cuts. I know that many institutions are in a similar position. As the Dean of ATEC, I've already implemented one significant cut, with another pending.

When I think about what has unfolded over the past year since the first round of “shelter in place” directives, I am saddened that we still cannot make plans to “gather together”—to do the very thing that would revive our spirits and renew our HASTAC friendships. I, personally, would relish the experience of eating a box lunch sitting on a concrete stair in the ATEC atrium while I figure out what session to go to next!

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank all the people who worked diligently on the HASTAC 2020 conference effort:

The ATEC Programming Committee: Kim Knight, xtine burrough, Heidi Rae Cooley, Josef Nguyen, Tuóc Nguyen, Hong-An Wu

The ATEC Logistics Committee: David Budd, Sandy Farrar, Rosalie McManis, Sally Mendiola, and Adrian Tapia

The HASTAC Leadership Team: Cathy Davidson, Jacqueline Wernimont, Katina Rogers, Brinker Ferguson, and Adashima Oyo

When I first met with Kim Knight, xtine burrough, and Heidi Cooley to discuss the idea of submitting a proposal to host HASTAC 2020, we talked about our hopes for the conference. I had just read the book by Priya Parker, *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why it Matters* in which she advocates the “art of transformative gatherings.” So inspired, we all agreed that we wanted to host a HASTAC gathering that would invigorate participants--in mind, body, and soul. And indeed, that is what the many people involved in the planning – both at HASTAC and at ATEC – set out to do!

Even as I feel disappointed that our plans fell through, I applaud the creativity and dedication of my colleagues who spent many hours drafting letters, working through logistics, and architecting what we hoped would be (yet another) memorable HASTAC conference.

We will gather again!

Until then, I wish you good health and calm resilience.



**ANNE BALSAMO**

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