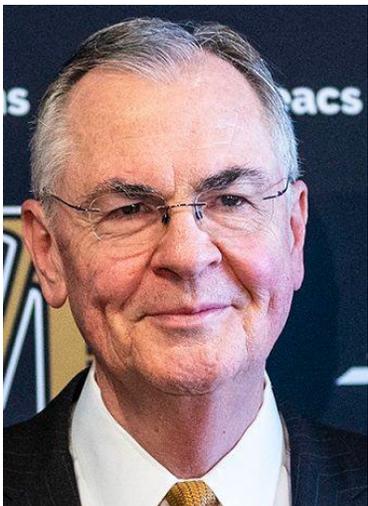


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## Nathan O. Hatch: What I told Vice President Mike Pence

By Nathan O. Hatch Guest columnist  
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Hatch

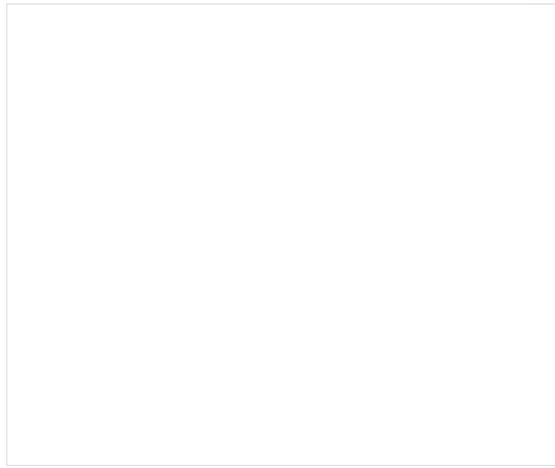
Last week, I was invited to a conversation with Vice President Mike Pence and 13 other college and university presidents across the country to discuss what it will take to reopen campuses in the fall.

We talked about all of the considerations — public health and safety concerns, testing availability, robust containment measures and economic impact. We shared the various struggles and contingencies we are all working through. We agreed that

universities are vital economic and innovative engines in their communities. And we admitted that there are no easy or predictable paths along this uncharted way.

When I was asked to share my perspective, I thought of a story that would illustrate our best way forward as a university and a community. I proudly talked about our “Mask the City” initiative with the vice president of the United States and shared the creativity, collaboration and unity of the Winston-Salem community. For this conversation is about more than returning to in-person classroom instruction at our nation’s universities; our concern should be about supporting our communities well as we seek to regain economic vitality safely.

As we have navigated these last several weeks, I shared how the people of Winston-Salem have learned to adapt to changing circumstances and adopt recommended practices. I told of the ingenuity of Dr. Bill Satterwhite and the specialists at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, who spent five days developing a prototype of a reusable mask. A few days later, the idea was shared with Renfro, which had the capability and the capacity to reconfigure their manufacturing enterprise from socks to masks. With the organization of Mayor Allen Joines, Don Flow and other community leaders, many businesses, civic organizations, colleges and universities, foundations and faith-based organizations have made it possible to purchase and distribute more than 300,000 masks — one for every person in the city.



What will it take to reopen our institutions of higher learning? The same principles that will allow us to reopen our communities, re-energize our economy and keep ourselves and our neighbors safe: adapting to our changing circumstances and adopting recommended practices to keep one another healthy. And so the people of Winston-Salem will “wear a mask, love your neighbor, protect yourself, and stop COVID-19.” We all are part of the solution. When we offer what we have — an idea, a quieted manufacturing operation, a monetary donation, an hour or two delivering masks to neighbors — we slowly become whole.

That is what I told Vice President Pence.

As we’ve faced unsettling and uncertain circumstances the last few months, I have never been more proud to be part of the Winston-Salem community. Though we are walking through this time of fire, we are not being consumed by it; we are allowing it to refine us.

Thank you for being a community that cares for one another. Thank you for being people who contribute your gifts and talents without hesitation. And thank

you for being a city that can set an admirable example for the rest of our nation.

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Hatch is the president of Wake Forest University.