



State of Missouri Team:

One of the best ways to keep going during tough times is to focus on your “why.” My “why” is a deeply held belief that education changes lives. It is a belief that is at the core of the new Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (DHEWD). Our team works to raise Missourians’ awareness of options for success after high school, get more Missourians on a path to success, increase educational attainment, and make the department the best place to work. That mission has never been more important than it is right now.

Since March, DHEWD team members have partnered with the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to help the record number of Missourians signing up for unemployment insurance benefits. The department has also helped workers find out how to get *off* those benefits by getting back to work. But, not just back to work. We want our citizens to go back to work *better*, with skills boosted through our Return Strong and Fast Track initiatives. Those programs provide funds our friends, family, and neighbors can use to earn short-term credentials. It will help them make more money in their new jobs than in their previous position from where they were laid off.

Government program details are boring, but the stories of the people who benefit from them help us connect with our “why.” Our staff helped a guy who had gotten laid off from his job as a network engineer. He earned cybersecurity credentials and got back into the workforce with an annual salary of over \$110,000. We helped another man, who had a lot of challenges, earn a commercial driver’s license and go from earning \$0 to \$43.33 an hour. The customer thanked the DHEWD team member who worked with him for “not giving up on him.” We helped a single mother with two teenage children achieve her childhood dream of becoming a nurse. She sent a note about her experience, saying, “Strangers helping us to succeed, their personal touch went far beyond ‘just a job.’”

We’ve also focused on making sure students who are preparing to start or return to college stay on their path. That includes if they are attending a different college or university than originally planned. We have also helped our colleges and universities prepare to safely receive those students this month.

Governor Parson has dedicated significant resources to support safe re-open efforts. We have spent countless hours with higher education leaders thinking through everything from classroom

configuration to confidentiality. Like everything else, college will look and feel different this fall. But, it's still going to be a great place to meet new people, learn new things, and prepare for a better future.

What we as public servants do has an impact on families for generations to come. What we *don't* do has just as significant and lasting an impact. I thank my fellow DHEWDs for all they've done to make a positive difference in the lives of the citizens we serve, and I thank all of you who are reading this as well. Your work matters. Hang in there – we'll get through this together.

Zora Mulligan

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