

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

We recently learned of the tragic loss of a member of our community who felt the hopelessness, loneliness and long pandemic exacerbated the feelings of anxiety and depression. All of us have spent hours discussing how we can be the front line of protecting at-risk individuals who consider taking their own lives. Here at the University, we are initiating steps to expand suicide awareness within our campus community through educational programs for faculty and staff, making peer-to-peer training available in the colleges, and looking for new resources to help those who are struggling find the assistance they need. Many of our colleges have already implemented support groups, educational sessions for faculty, and greater involvement in the identification and outreach to others. As long as even one individual feels all is lost and life is not worth living, then we still have much work to do. Our actions today are very important as it is my hope to prevent a trajectory of increasing stresses on our mental health, and the difficulty to remain positive while we continue to be in this public health crisis, especially as we approach the upcoming holidays, and the long winter months.

Our counseling centers on both the Glendale and Downers Grove campus are available for every student, and can provide students and their families with resources and referrals for those seeking help in developing strong coping skills. We have an Employee Assistance Plan available to everyone in the University, and I am encouraging our faculty and staff to utilize the new benefit of eMindful found at <https://emindful.com/home/> and take advantage of this wonderful program.

This past week we have had one positive case of COVID-19 as reported from a faculty/staff member on the Downers Grove campus and three students test positive, with two from the Downers Grove campus and one from the Glendale campus. None of these individuals have been on our campuses. I wish to once again thank all of you who are abiding by the Midwestern University guidelines of wearing a mask on campus, practicing social distancing of at least six feet from each other and washing your hands frequently. We are so very fortunate to be containing the spread of COVID-19 within our campus community. At this time, we have not had one individual become infected with the coronavirus on campus, and you can all help us keep this strong record going.

Diversity and Inclusion: 5-Point Plan Update

- The new Diversity and Inclusion website can be found at <https://www.midwestern.edu/about/diversity-equity-and-inclusion.xml>
- The University Research Committee has launched the *Health Equity Research Seminar Series* that promotes awareness of various health disparities and inequities. The seminars will be virtual and highlight both our own faculty and experts from outside the university. The first two seminar presentations are:
 - *Prioritizing Systems Based Frameworks When Explaining African American Children's Language Development and Inequitable School Outcomes*, presented by RaMonda Horton, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, Associate Professor, Midwestern University, to be held on Friday, October 23rd, 12-1pm (CST)
 - *Health Disparities Research with Refugee and Immigrant Communities*, to be held on Friday, November 13th, 12-1pm (CST), presented by Mansha Mirza, Ph.D., OTR/L, Associate Professor, University of Illinois at Chicago

- Over the past few months, Office of Human Resources staff on both campuses have met to discuss the University's Call to Action Plan, as well as department culture and climate, suggestions for improvement, and learning opportunities related to diversity and inclusion. The department also conducted a confidential internal survey containing questions regarding diversity and inclusion within HR; following the survey, the team met to review and make a list of suggestions for improvement of communication, team building, inclusion and development. Department managers carefully reviewed and discussed the internal survey results and plans for developing a roadmap for actionable steps.
 - HR has also launched new campus-wide employee training on the topic of bias, implemented an improved supervisor training includes diversity topics and confidential reporting, and will schedule quarterly diversity and inclusion in-services, and include information on the monthly HR newsletter. New employee onboarding includes the review and acknowledgment of the University's Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement, the confidential reporting portal, as well as an introduction to the new diversity and inclusion section of the Midwestern University website. HR also published the recently reviewed and updated Anti-Harassment Policy, Non-Discrimination Policy, and Code of Conduct Policy. The department will also publish a Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report to highlight goals and progress, a link to our Affirmative Action Plan, list of partner outside organizations, and programs and events.

- Dr. Kemper provided a comprehensive update on the recent activities of the Arizona College of Osteopathic Medicine (AZCOM) Task Forces on Curriculum, Outreach, Wellness, and Admissions. Each task force has participation from AZCOM students, faculty, staff, and alumni, as well as CHS students and University staff from other departments.
 - The Curriculum Task Force recommended textbooks to the University library with reference photos of individuals of various skin colors, surveyed students and faculty regarding curriculum, recommended the review of lecture slides to ensure inclusivity and address potential bias, and implemented a Humanity in Medicine course starting next Spring 2021 for the Class of 2024.
 - The Outreach Task Force has planned a survey that, if approved by the IRB, will be distributed to HOME Clinic clients. This task force will also engage alumni to help make recordings for our Admissions webpage, and review clinical outreach initiatives with alumni.
 - The Wellness Task Force created and will distribute a student survey to assess wellness, conducted a SWOT analysis to create a vision for the task force, will collaborate with the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine, and is planning QPR (Question/Persuade/Refer) training as one of its goals.
 - The Admissions Task Force is working on updating articulation agreements for direct admission into AZCOM with the College of Graduate Studies, GCU, ASU, NAU, and UA. A new AZCOM/CGS Bridges Program is now in place; it addresses guaranteed admissions for 25 eligible, URM (Under Represented Minority) students each year who meet the program requirements. Student participation in virtual and in-person open houses is also being planned.

I could not be prouder of the commitment, dedication and work being done in a grassroots manner to bring greater diversity and understanding to our academic community. It is a journey that can only strengthen our commitment to our mission and each other. We must match our commitment to our mission with a drive to help others who may feel they have no hope in the darkness or nowhere turn,

and help them remember they too are important members of our community. Let's remember what Thomas Edison stated, "When you have exhausted all possibilities remember this: you haven't."

Be well.

Dr. G.