

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

2020 has been a roller coaster of a year. On many occasions, a few of us have wished to move on to happier and easier times. While we dream of just fast forwarding to 2021, I do not see an immediate change in our current status as the public health crisis is still with us.

In anticipation of a COVID-19 vaccine being available in 2021, the Midwestern University Multispecialty Clinics are investigating and applying to become vaccine distribution sites for our patients and own community. Until then, we all need to continue observing the recommended precautions of wearing a face mask, staying home when ill, and washing our hands frequently. There is mounting evidence to support the fact that we can stop the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a face mask, and we need to be diligent to this important hygiene practice. Please note that a face shield alone is not an acceptable form of protection, unless this has been previously approved in writing by Human Resources or the Dean of Students due to medical reasons. However, wearing both a face mask and face shield at the same time is acceptable.

The number of COVID-19 cases continue to increase throughout the country. One of the hardest hit states is Illinois. We are closely monitoring directives that could be issued by the Illinois Governor's Office at any time and will notify faculty, staff and students if new stay-at-home orders or other regulations are implemented. Until that time, we will continue our current hybrid educational model, and will continue to support those faculty and staff members who have received approval to temporarily work from home. The City of Chicago has issued travel restrictions when entering the City from other states, and any faculty, staff or students living in the City of Chicago should carefully review these regulations prior to making travel plans for the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Those traveling to and from Chicago may be subjected to a 14-day quarantine.

Many students are considering remaining on campus over the Thanksgiving break. If you plan to remain in student housing, please let Student Services know of your plans. As other student complete exams and head home for Thanksgiving, please continue your safe practices of wearing a mask, remaining socially distant and monitoring your health. You may be joining parents and grandparents that are in a higher risk category and as a health care student, the protection of their health and yours is of utmost importance. This past week we have learned of 3 faculty on the Downers Grove campus who tested positive for COVID-19; we have no positive faculty or staff cases from our Glendale campus. However, Midwestern University's number of positive student cases on both of our campuses remain high for the second week in a row. I cannot stress enough that every member of our community needs to be very focused on staying well. This begins with honestly and accurately answering the daily health screening. This week we had 10 students who tested positive for COVID-19 on the Downers Grove campus, and 13 students who tested positive on the Glendale campus. While we have had to quarantine a number of other students, there is not a specific pattern to this outbreak, and many of these students have not been on campus, or in contact with faculty and staff. We have learned of our first serious case, for which a student had to be hospitalized this past week due to COVID-19 complications. Fortunately, the student is recovering and receiving excellent care.

## 5 Step Plan for Diversity and Inclusion

- The student group, *Allies of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity*, have published their inaugural installment of AIDE newsletter. These students are part of the Wellness, Service and Research Diversity Task Force of the College of Graduate Studies. This excellent first publication can be found on the Midwestern University, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion website. To find the newsletter please go to the In The News tab. This publication highlights the importance of family, legacies and celebrating diversity. My congratulations to the editors, Maria Valdez, 1<sup>st</sup> year MBS student, and Pegah Biparva, 2<sup>nd</sup> year MBS student, for a job well done.
- Chicago College of Optometry faculty are taking on various leadership roles within the college's Diversity Task Force, the campus community and in the optometry profession. They are working with many organizations, including the Association and Schools and Colleges of Optometry, various pre-optometry clubs, and the newly formed CCO chapter of the National Optometric Student Association (NOSA), and are also reaching out to underrepresented minority students to provide greater diversity to our campus community.

The roller coaster ride will continue for a number of months to come. We need to prepare ourselves for highs and lows as we approach the upcoming holidays, which will be challenging and very different from previous years. However, as a campus community, we will also celebrate our many blessings, and continue to look for the little ways to show colleagues, family and friends they are appreciated. Be on the lookout for announcements about our upcoming plans!

Please be very diligent about your health in the days to come. We all need to continue doing our part to contain the spread while taking care of each other.

Be well.

Dr. G.

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