

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

Having spent most of my childhood in Illinois, I loved studying Abraham Lincoln and all of his profound sayings. One of my favorites quotes is “The best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time.” As we navigate these unprecedented times, we find many new issues and concerns that arise daily. Some of the questions are easy to solve and others present challenges that can be emotionally exhausting for our faculty, staff and students. Many unanswered decisions are waiting on the professional accreditation agencies and the Department of Education. We cannot make other plans until we know what will be allowed under their standards.

Between the devastating and frightening ongoing news about COVID-19 in New York, Chicago and other major cities, I can see why local and state officials are taking all cautionary actions and restricting all gatherings. We are working and following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines while also following local health department directives. The Midwestern University state of preparedness relates to many factors and the suddenness of how quickly this health care crisis has occurred.

The COVID-19 Response Team met today and reviewed a number of issues.

2020 Spring Graduations

- As announced in my Evening Update 3/26/2020, we shared that the Spring Graduations Ceremonies would be online. Many of you asked why? Others asked why not just postpone until August or September 2020.
- Major factors were considered in the decision not to delay graduations:
 - The CDC is beginning to discuss the possibility of “Stay at Home” or “Shelter in Place” until the end of May. Even if it is lifted sooner, we are not sure how many individuals will be comfortable entering an auditorium of 3000 people.
 - Airlines are allowing refunds and cancellations until April 1, 2020. (A few are starting to delay that date but not yet). I want the many families that travel for a graduation to be able to get a refund. We have enough financial stress on families already.
 - Some students have made commitments to begin new residencies and jobs immediately following graduation in May. I don’t feel we can jeopardize their ability to enter residency programs, begin new jobs and delay sitting for licensing exams.
 - Our military students must graduate and be commissioned as officers prior to entering their residency programs in June 2020.
 - Health care workers are in very short supply. Knowing they are needed; we have asked the various accreditation agencies about the ability to graduate our students early. Most accreditation agencies have said no, all competencies and courses must be completed. Additional serious considerations are student financial aid loans and health care coverage.
 - Finally, many students are completing their last quarter online and have already returned home. It is our hope that when they can easily travel and attend events, they will be able to return.
- Will we have graduation ceremonies on campus later this year?
 - Yes, we will hold on campus ceremonies when we feel we can safely bring large gatherings back to campus.

- These will be voluntary attendance and no student will be forced to return to the campus if they are busy in a residency or new practice and either cannot afford the time or the expense to return.
- Please keep your graduation regalia; these items are yours, and you will need them later in the year.

Other Announcements

- Our Ad Hoc Committee for Online Education is assisting with the rapid deployment of new software programs and other technologies to support our wonderful Information Technology team to continue to implement new systems for distance learning.
- Plans are underway to develop our new student orientation. We are carefully planning for the new students to make them feel welcome to campus.

I do understand many of you have said you feel isolated when working and studying at home. I am finding that the lack of faculty, staff and students on campus has given me a greater appreciation for the energy of our campuses and interaction we have with each other. Just remember, "The best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time."

Have a good weekend and be well.

Dr. G.