

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

The great philosopher Zhuangzi once said, “A path is made by walking on it.” Only by forging ahead into the unknown do we actually make progress, and only by looking back can we see how far we’ve come. As we usher in the month of May, I look back at the path we’ve walked since the middle of March, I reflect on how much we have accomplished to protect the livelihood of our faculty and staff, and how we have continued to teach and engage our students. It has been a long journey but all of you have accomplished a great deal. We now we need to adjust our focus as we prepare to begin a new phase for a gradual reopening of our campus for clinic visits, while anticipating additional faculty and staff on campus. All of this will happen only after State Executive Orders requiring Stay-At-Home mandates are lifted.

My greatest focus in the weeks to come is your safety. As we begin to responsibly plan for the future, key questions are being addressed such as campus and clinic face mask policies, new signage highlighting our social distancing policies, and scheduling for patient visits in our clinics. While none of us are in a position to know exactly what state and federal changes will be mandated, we are drafting plans that align with the information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and our public health departments. One thing is certain, as we prepare for the post-outbreak era, we will be making some physical changes. We have already taken great steps to increase campus cleaning, provide everyone with fresh outside air, and adjust seating to provide six feet between patients, students and faculty. Will our campus community look a little different? Yes. What will not change is our compassion for our colleagues, patients, students and service to the community. My commitment to all of you is unwavering.

We are all learning important lessons during this public health care crisis. I have heard from some of you sharing that working from home is isolating and lonely. If you are feeling stressed and disconnected, please reach out to others. Each day the COVID-19 Response Team, like today, Friday, May 1, 2020, meets via Microsoft Teams. It has become an important tool for all of us to stay connected and talk through the policies, projects and strategic plans together. I would encourage other groups of faculty and staff to stay connected in a similar way. If you can meaningfully connect with colleagues you miss, try holding a virtual breakfast or lunch breaks, do video phone chats, and hold departmental meetings. Staying connected is a wonderful way to support each other.

Announcements

- Once again Midwestern University is very fortunate to report that no faculty, staff or students have tested positive for COVID-19. Each day we monitor our cafeteria staffs, bookstore managers, cleaning crews and construction teams. No one has reported feeling ill.
- Midwestern University has submitted a formal request to the Department of Education today, to allow us to continue online and distant learning, if necessary for all students to enroll in summer quarter, including newly admitted first year students. This is a major step in safeguarding our students’ ability to remain on track for their academic calendars and complete their degrees as scheduled. The submission of this massive document was truly a team effort that could not have occurred without the academic deans and key staff members coming together to advocate for our students.

- In both Arizona and Illinois, there is a drive to increase testing for COVID-19. Many are calling these a “testing blitz”. Midwestern University is not requiring anyone to be tested unless your own personal physician recommends it. While there are many voluntary testing opportunities in both states, this is a personal decision and not required for your employment. However, our policy of staying at home if you are ill does not change. Please take care of yourself and your family.

In ancient times, the first day of the month of May was celebrated as the beginning of spring, often calling for village celebrations, dances and special foods. As I reflected on wonderful pictures of flowering trees and daffodils on the Downers Grove campus this morning, and saw the beautiful Palo Verde Trees in full bloom, providing bright yellow flowers everywhere you look on the Glendale campus, I envision a new light. Let’s celebrate spring as the end of the dark and dreary days of winter are finally behind us. And while many of you are still staying home, let’s think about spring as a turning point. You all have helped us blaze a trail into helping others stay healthy; we cannot stop now, but will finish strong as we enjoy the warmth of the spring days.

Please have a peaceful and restful weekend.

Be well.

Dr. G.