

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

I recently saw a sign that said, “Life does not have to be perfect to be wonderful.” As we continue to face the challenges of this public health crisis, I know many of you continue to find your role always changing, while we face new expectations from family and friends, become impatient with the lack of medical breakthroughs, and the end to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am reminded each day that the lingering impact of the pandemic has rendered us less than perfect options, but we need to face this new reality and move ahead.

We are facing these challenges together. None of our decisions have come easily and without great concern about the health and safety of our faculty, staff and students. The Response Team includes more than 35 administrative personnel working tirelessly to plan, prepare our campus facilities, adjust curriculums, and introduce new technology to assist us during these challenging times. We have relied on our in-house Public Health expert, clinicians, and Academic Deans to help us make the Fall 2020 quarter as effective as possible for our new and returning students.

We have relied on the communication from these Response Team leaders to represent their faculty and staff in all deliberations and plans. As an institution delivering graduate health care education, we know we cannot stop and wait for the end of COVID-19. Our students are counting on all of us to educate them while providing a quality education. Our colleges and programs are delivering educational sessions through a number of approved methods.

This past week, we have no new faculty or staff cases to report on both our campuses. We omitted one positive case last week that was reported on Monday, August 3, 2020 from a member of the University that had not been on campus for three weeks due to an out of state vacation. This past week we have had a total of 5 positive student cases of COVID-19; 2 from the Downers Grove Campus and 3 from the Glendale Campus. These students have not been on either campus. We continue to maintain a safe campus community thanks to the many measures we have taken over the past six months to prepare for the careful return of faculty, staff and students. By now, everyone is familiar with completing a detailed, mandatory daily health screening process. Both campuses continue to utilize state-of-the-art cleaning and sanitizing procedures, and we have prepared the campuses for the recommended social distancing guidelines for all faculty, staff and students.

#### New Measures Scheduled for Implementation

- We are establishing “teaching studios” in specified classrooms in order to provide high level technology for presenting lectures and delivering course materials. By using on-campus classrooms for lectures, a faculty member can utilize unique, licensed software that provides students with higher level video quality, closed captioning and high fidelity recording. All of our lecture halls and classrooms have been equipped with this new and improved technology. This technology is not available if you are providing all lectures from home. In addition, academic departments will provide faculty with a sanitization kit to wipe down a keyboard or microphone prior to using the equipment.
- We are providing tall, rolling acrylic wall shields for faculty who are in classrooms that do not allow a substantial distance between them and the small cohorts of students. These will be provided, as needed, on both campuses.

- The campus face mask policy has been slightly revised to offer more options for faculty who teach in a lecture hall or classroom. It now reads, “Faculty and instructors who are lecturing and able to maintain a distance greater than 6 feet from students, may opt to not wear a face covering or disposable mask during the lecture. Faculty and instructors may opt to use face shields or maintain greater distance from students. For faculty and instructors who wear a face covering or disposable mask, they should be vigilant about speaking loudly and clearly. The type of cloth face covering, if made of many layers of cloth, may muffle one’s voice. Faculty and instructors should regularly communicate during lectures to ensure students can hear them clearly and encourage students to speak up if they are unable to clearly hear the faculty or instructor.”
- Students are required to have a face mask on at all times in lecture halls and classrooms. In most of our didactic classes, students always have had the option to attend class in person, or online, and this option remains viable for students this fall.

#### Call to Action for Greater Diversity and Inclusion

- The College of Graduate Studies has implemented a very impressive action plan that creates opportunities for great collaboration between students and faculty. Their plan includes new and innovative Admissions plans driven by the 52% student members of this task force. Further, the plan undertakes a comprehensive Curriculum review that will survey all courses to increase diversity and inclusion materials, and an Outreach subcommittee that includes a mentorship program developed by the committee, of which 68% are students. The students have also designed their own inclusion logos, suggested a newsletter, and have taken impressive steps to involve other colleges and students with their plans.
- The College of Dental Medicine Illinois has also finalized their comprehensive analysis of the listening sessions and developed a plan of action based on challenges and opportunities to make a difference in diversity and inclusion. Their five step action plan includes: Interactive Small Group Bias and Inclusion Training, Faculty and Staff in-person-training, scheduled for early 2021, to bring greater sensitivity to treating diverse patient populations as well as greater sensitivity to colleagues and students; a Student Action Plan which will bring about changes this fall in the orientation process and simulation center assignments; and the addition of guest speakers on diversity. Finally, the College of Dental Medicine Illinois will focus their new student recruitment efforts around the recruitment of Black and Hispanic candidates with outreach to organizations like the National Black Student Union, National Association of Latino Fraternal Organization and the National Native American Education Association. Their overall impressive plan will definitely make a difference throughout the College and University for years to come.

#### Vehicles for Reporting Concerns

- If you wish to report any violation to our Safe Return to Campus standards, such as failure to wear a face mask, not following social distancing, groups gathering in small close groups, you can report this by going to the CARS home page and click on “Incident Reporting”, and then go to COVID-19 Health Concerns. There you can report any concerns and it will be investigated and addressed by management within 24 hours.

- As previously announced, any violation of our standards to maintain cultural diversity, equity and an inclusive as a welcoming campus community can be reported at our home page, [www.Midwestern.edu](http://www.Midwestern.edu). The reporting link is at the bottom of each page.

I really understand that the continuing pandemic has many of you concerned about coming to campus, returning to an office or laboratory. Many of you have already applied for an exemption to our hybrid educational program by applying for a waiver for health reasons, either for yourself or loved ones. Others have requested temporary work arrangements to address child care needs. Remember, these are options available to all faculty and staff.

While these are not perfect days, we need to remember that we are a mission driven and caring community, dedicated to students and each other. And yes, let's not forget it is a wonderful life.

Be well.

Dr. G.