

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

The countdown to spring graduations has begun! This is an exciting and important time for many of our students who will be completing their studies and graduating from their programs in the next six weeks. This upcoming month is a very important one for our graduating students as they prepare themselves for residency programs and opportunities to advance their careers. We look forward to seeing them become active members of the healthcare community and proud alumni of Midwestern University.

For our new and returning students who are busy making plans for their summer classes or preparing for the fall quarter, we are working to carefully plan the return to campus for classes, lectures, laboratory sessions, and use of the Testing Centers. Our Response Team Committees are reviewing the logistics necessary for all of our faculty, staff and students to safely return to campus, which includes evaluating class schedules along with physical reconfigurations of our labs, lobbies and classrooms. We are planning for a modified Summer Quarter and will be announcing our plans for the Fall Quarter within the next few weeks. At this time, there is no modification of our safety protocols which still include wearing a face mask and maintaining social distancing practices when in public areas, clinics, classrooms and laboratories, as we work toward getting our community vaccinated.

To date, 60% of our students, faculty, and staff are reporting that they are fully vaccinated. Scientists tell us then when enough people become immune to a disease, significant spread of that disease becomes unlikely, and the entire community benefits from that protection. Researchers believe that for a community to be protected from COVID-19, approximately 70% of the members of that community must have immunity. We are rapidly approaching this 70% goal and hope to exceed it by the start of the 2021-22 academic year.

If you have not received your vaccination, please take advantage of Operation Hope, at both the Vaccination Centers on the Downers Grove and Glendale Campuses. We have opened the vaccination registration to all of our family, friends and neighbors. In addition, we welcome our alumni and their family members to make an appointment for their vaccinations in our Vaccination Centers. This week, we are also inviting all new and incoming students to get vaccinated. Students living close to campus are encouraged to make an appointment with us; those living in other parts of the country are encouraged to get vaccinated prior to coming to campus.

Diversity and Inclusion

Last week we announced the Pharmacy Faculty/Student Relations Diversity Task Force had plans to host a very special presentation on May 18th by Mrs. Rena Finder, a Holocaust and Schindler's List Survivor. Unfortunately, due to personal health reasons, her presentation has been postponed. We look forward to scheduling Ms. Finder's presentation sometime during the 2021-22 academic year.

This upcoming Friday, April 23, 2021 an hour long presentation will be made available to the Glendale Campus at 9:00 A.M. and the Downers Grove Campus at 11:00 A.M., as part of the Kenneth A. Suarez Research Day. Our KAS Research Day Keynote speaker, Jeremy M. Berg, Ph.D. will present, "Driving Increased Diversity and Inclusion in the Scientific Enterprise Through Data Collection, Analysis and Sharing". Dr. Berg is a respected educator, researcher and administrator (<https://www.health.pitt.edu/people/jeremy-m-berg>). Some of his accomplishments include:

- Director of the National Institute of General Medical Science (NIGMS), overseeing a \$2 billion NIH budget to support biomedical research.
- Editor-in-Chief of *Science*, one of the top science journals in the world.
- President of the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB).
- Lead author on the most widely used biochemistry text in the world, *Biochemistry*, first published by Lubert Stryer.
- Has mentored many trainees leading to over 130 peer-reviewed publications.
- Dr. Berg's recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion in Science has been notable over the years. As President of ASBMB, Dr. Berg recognized the need for greater awareness of implicit biases in scientific evaluations. As Director of NIGMS, Dr. Berg was tasked with revamping the Pioneer Awards to include more women and minorities as applicants and judges (<https://www.nature.com/articles/nm0905-912b>). As Editor-in-Chief of *Science*, he has written on the advantages of privilege and has led efforts to provide greater opportunities to individuals with different life experiences (<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6464/401>).

As we all continue to look forward to the upcoming months, we cannot lose sight of what we have accomplished since March, 2020. When the global pandemic began, our community transitioned at lightning speed to support our students, faculty and staff. Today, we are once again in a transition period that will involve the same careful planning the University implemented a year ago to keep everyone safe and secure. Our outlook is brighter as we focus on the future that welcomes the excitement of having students on campus, engaged with their faculty, colleagues and activities. Together we can make this happen!

Be well.

Dr. G.