

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

I was asked a simple question, “When the stay-at-home is lifted, and restaurants and other stores are open, what do you want to do first?” While this seems like a fun question to begin pondering, I think it is much more significant. What I heard was a statement of hope and the beginning to plan the end of the “stay-at-home” executive orders. Maybe not in a week or two, but hopefully in the weeks to come. This question presents us with an important challenge to change the focus of our attention.

Until now our attention has been on the crisis. Do you hear your family and friends sharing how they are dealing with the difficult day-to-day issues that have adversely impacted the lives of their children, family and economic well-being? Every news outlet spends all their broadcasting hours dealing with the continuation of new cases of COVID-19, updates on areas of our country that are adversely impacted, and the tragic loss of life. Daily we are confronted with new recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; just today it was suggested that all residents in public areas should wear cloth face covers, and save disposable surgical masks for health care providers. Yesterday, the Governor of the State of Arizona issued an additional Executive Order requiring out-of-state travelers entering Arizona from areas of “substantial community spread” of COVID-19 to isolate or quarantine for 14 days. All of these issues keep us in the present, but I think we have to begin focusing on the future.

As a community, I think we need to focus on what’s next. We have wonderful opportunities before us to be stronger, work smarter and connect with our students in new and effective ways. We have been challenged to rapidly adapt to a health care crisis that has taught us to be better prepared, agile, and always looking at new and evolving scenarios. Midwestern University is ready for the challenge. The COVID-19 Response Team met today, April 8, 2020 and discussed a number of key issues.

Incoming Students

- We have started planning for the upcoming summer orientation of our new students who are beginning their healthcare education at an unprecedented time. Never before has the need for healthcare professionals been so pronounced. We have witnessed the shortage of healthcare providers in many professions and are eager to begin teaching new students as they enter their chosen programs. They are needed as members of the future healthcare work force.
- While contingency plans for an online summer orientation are being considered, at this time we are expecting all incoming students to report to campus on their scheduled dates. We are very excited to meet them.
- We are encouraging all incoming students to continue to contact us through email, telephone and the MWUNET campus portal. Through these channels, we are updating incoming students about Financial Aid, Student Services and each other. We are here to help the new incoming students be fully prepared to begin their programs.

Graduation Planning and Military Commissioning Ceremonies

- We know that our students must graduate this spring, and a few of you would like us to just postpone commencement ceremonies until the fall. However, this is not possible for many Spring 2020 graduates who need us to formally confer a degree. These graduates need to enter

residency programs, begin new positions, enter additional professional programs and take licensing board exams.

- Many academic deans have spoken to their graduating classes and provided us with valuable feedback. This feedback has been taken seriously, and we continue to develop plans to provide a meaningful graduation celebration that can be shared with family members, near and far.
- The Faculty Senate met today and approved the Midwestern University Graduates for 2020. This recommendation will now be presented for approval to the Board of Trustees. Once fully ratified, we will begin printing diplomas for distribution to your homes.
- We are still planning various on-campus events later in the year when large groups can safely gather again.
- Military Commissioning requirements are being discussed in order to have students on HPSP scholarships, or those that have signed up for active duty, commissioned upon graduation.

As I focus on what's next, I cannot help but think of one of my favorite profound quotes, "You're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think," by none other than Winnie the Pooh. This evening, take a minute to hug your kids, laugh with your special someone, and begin thinking about when the "stay-at-home" executive orders are lifted, how will we celebrate?

Be well.

Dr. G.