

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

I am sorry to inform you that we have our first confirmed employee COVID-19 case. It is an Illinois faculty member whose family member was infected prior to our employee becoming ill. The employee has not been on campus for the past ten days, with the last day worked being March 30, 2020. We have identified seven coworkers that came in contact with the faculty and they have all been contacted. We are protecting the identify of this member of our academic family; your prayers and best wishes for the health and wellbeing of everyone at Midwestern University are appreciated.

Up until now, I have felt very fortunate that we have not had an employee cases to report. The first two students who tested positive upon returning from their vacation, were not on campus at any time and fortunately, they have recovered. This reminds me of all the careful steps we are taking to protect ourselves and colleagues. Please continue to practice social distancing, avoid travel, and frequently wash your hands. Now that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have recommended everyone wear a cloth face covering, we are supporting and encouraging everyone to do the same in any public setting. I have seen some very creative homemade face coverings in the past few days, including one with a Midwestern University seal!

As a healthcare university, we have to maintain the health of our faculty, staff and students, as well as their families. We have taken many additional precautions to deep clean and sanitize our campuses, encouraged faculty and staff to work from home when possible, and asked those on campus to avoid or limit attendance at group gatherings. We are taking new measures with our cafeteria and cleaning vendors to assure their personnel are complying with the high standards set by Midwestern University.

Just as we enhanced benefits and made changes to course delivery, we need to implement new requirements regarding time management. Midwestern University could be challenged by outside auditors to verify our faculty and staff were actually working from home. In many other organizations, accounting for work performed is a common practice. Just reflect on friends working in law offices, sales positions, and accounting roles that have to account for their daily and hourly tasks. This kind of recordkeeping has been implemented for many years in our clinics as we record patient visits and submit for reimbursement. At this time, we are collecting daily logs from staff and faculty. Supervisors are collecting this data to protect the many hours and benefits we are providing, including the additional flex time benefit.

At the COVID-19 Response Team meeting on April 9, 2020, a number of important announcements were made that impact all faculty and staff of Midwestern University.

Health Care Benefits

- In light of receiving news of our first confirmed employee case of COVID-19, we are implementing important changes to the Blue Cross Blue Shield Health Care Plans for faculty and staff.
- All COVID-19 related treatment will be paid at 100% until the end of this calendar year.
- This includes all medical claims, pharmacy prescriptions, professional services, imaging, emergency room service, inpatient hospital services, intensive care services and any supportive service that directly relates to a diagnosis of COVID-19.

- What does this mean to you? This means that all deductibles, co-insurance and co-pays are waived.
- By making this change retroactively to April 1, 2020, our first reported case will be covered.

Capturing Special COVID-19 Expenses

- Business Services needs all of us to help capture COVID-19 expenses.
- We are tracking all the additional items we have purchased over the past six weeks that constitute special equipment, learning tools, technology (software and hardware), unusual cleaning costs, additional PPE, special consulting services, and any other items that our departments needed as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis.
- If your department has donated any PPE or equipment to First Responders or our hospital partners, please notify your supervisor.
- Please provide your supervisor with a list of any other items you think fall into this special category.

Yesterday, I received a letter from an alumnus from the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine, Class of 1977. I have known Dr. Lance Christiansen for a long time, having visited his impressive clinical practice many years ago. Today, at the age of 80, he still runs the largest solo medical practice in the State of Washington. In his letter he reminds me that he was a reconnaissance fighter pilot during the Vietnam war, and has “seen it all.” Dr. Christiansen’s letter was sent to me as a thank you. He wrote, “I became the physician and caregiver I am today because of the faculty who taught and mentored me while at Midwestern University”. He commented that he remembers “vividly every teacher and member of our community who impacted my life.”

I believe all of you, faculty and staff impact the lives of our students and each other. You set the examples in your teaching, mentoring, guiding, and presence on campus and in our clinics. It is my hope that you will be vividly remembered for many years to come. May all of you take pride in your legacy. Let’s not waiver in our mission and commitment to our students or each other during this current public health crisis. We will get through this – together.

Be well.

Dr. G.