

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

Next Tuesday, September 22, 2020 we will experience the “Autumnal Equinox”, known to most of us as the beginning of autumn or fall. It is a time when we begin to see equal amounts of night and day, and get to enjoy the brilliant shades of orange and red on our trees as they prepare to drop their leaves. Many of us will be pulling sweaters out of storage; preparing more comfort foods, thinking about the many uses of pumpkin in the months ahead as children begin selecting their Halloween costumes. I think of the autumn as a beautiful time of year when the cooler weather begins to usher in the upcoming holidays. While we all know that this autumn will be different than others as we are still dealing with the public health crisis, I do hope it is a time for all our faculty, staff and students to continue to focus on the importance of our mission of caring for each other as we strive to keep our colleagues, family and friends healthy.

I am happy to report that we have improved our COVID-19 reporting page on the Midwestern University website. The revised reporting page highlights the cumulative cases since the virus was identified and will now include all confirmed cases, regardless of whether or not the faculty, staff or student was on campus. The new presentation highlights a rolling four-week average, and includes this past weeks numbers where we have identified two new positive cases for faculty and staff, both in Arizona and three students tested positive, two from the Glendale campus and one from the Downers Grove campus. None of these individuals have been on campus. This change in reporting reflects the increased populations coming to campus and an increase in student clinical rotations. Overall, we have been very fortunate through this pandemic and have not identified one case that was spread on campus. To view this website please go to: <https://online.midwestern.edu/public/covidreporting.cgi>.

Please remain diligent in wearing your face masks, practice social distancing and wash your hands frequently. I am asking all faculty, staff and students to protect yourself further by getting a flu shot this month. It is one additional way you can help protect your health and the health of your loved ones.

#### 5-Point Action Plan on Diversity and Inclusion

- On August 26, 2020, the Chicago College of Optometry hosted a two-hour continuing education program via WebEx on the topic *African Americans, COVID-19 and the Interdisciplinary Team: A Panel Discussion with Medicine, Optometry, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine, and Psychology*. Jeanie C. Lucy, O.D., M.P.H., Assistant Professor of the College, was the main presenter and moderator. Dr. Lucy addressed disparities in health care in the United States, based on racial and ethnic inequalities, as well as gaps in life expectancy, infant mortality and disease incidence between racial and ethnic groups. This panel discussion also addressed how multidisciplinary teams can work together to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. The team of panelist for this CE event included faculty experts from many of our Colleges; all of them offered valuable insight about the COVID-19 pandemic at large, varying strategies for spread mitigation, confirmed cases in animals and potential treatment therapies. The panelists agreed that COVID-19 brought to light various health, socioeconomic, racial and ethnic disparities that need to be addressed. This WebEx was well attended by faculty and staff from both the Downers Grove and Glendale Campuses. It is now available to view at <https://midwestern.webex.com/midwestern/lsr.php?RCID=7c20591b6a0b4d00874e99ddee350cf0>. Many special thanks to Dr. Lucy and to all the excellent speakers.

- Students interested in applying for the new Minority Scholarship, funded by the Midwestern University Response Team and members of our faculty and staff, can find the application available now on the Midwestern University student portal. The application can be found in the Financial Aid Scholarship Section and must be completed and submitted by October 15, 2020.
- Coming Soon! The Midwestern University Diversity and Inclusion Committee has reported on a number of key steps that help us fulfill the 5-Point Action Plan on Diversity and Inclusion. One of their suggestions is the development of a Diversity section within the Midwestern University website that highlights faculty, staff and student testimonials, student and organizational events, a resource section that includes full-text access to the Midwestern University Library Resources on cross-cultural, LGBTQIA+, disabilities, mental and behavioral health and antiracism. This new and important web page is currently under development with the assistance of the Office of Communications.

As we usher in the autumn months, let's all enjoy the crisp air, colorful leaves and the transition from a very hot summer to a new and beautiful season. May all of us welcome this seasonal transformation with new hope in the air.

Be well.

Dr. G.