

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students,

“In the midst of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer.” I have to agree with philosopher Albert Camus; this weekend I found my summer through beacons of bright light amongst the increasingly devastating news of the spread of COVID-19. The bright lights are the Midwestern University’s incredible students, faculty, staff, and alumni. As our nation battles the coronavirus crisis, I have encountered extraordinary individuals working on behalf of our community, to name a few.

The Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine students have developed a COVID-19 Task Force and are donating their time and energy to help those in need. They have proudly stated, “We are volunteers doing their best to offer services such as babysitting, pet sitting, food/prescription deliveries and healthcare assistance. With our very limited resources we are doing our best to serve those in need.” What a wonderful statement from our future physicians who go beyond the bedside to care for individuals.

A graduate of our Biomedical Science Program Dominik, is a member of the Abbott Lab Research Team that announced the news this weekend that the COVID-19 rapid testing device is in production. Dominik wrote to his faculty mentor the following, “I feel proud of how Midwestern University prepared me with such a strong foundational level of education that that I was able to achieve and present myself for a national level assignment.” The faculty who share their labs and research with all our students are contributing greatly to the advances in health care in this country, as evidenced in many alumni like Dominik.

And finally, I heard from a Physician Assistant Graduate Jackie, who wrote to say she is definitely on the front line representing the key Physician Assistant profession as an important member of the Health Care Team in an inner-city Detroit Emergency Room. As I reflected on her email, I thought about all of our health care graduates working in stressful situations around the country. This morning I asked members of the COVID-19 Response Team to take a moment of silence to pray for all of these brave individuals. If you wish, please join us in prayer.

The COVID-19 Response Team met today, Monday, 3/30/20 and made a number of important decisions.

Federal Social Distancing Directive Extended to May 1, 2020

- Midwestern University will honor this directive during the entire month of April, 2020. All Colleges have assured us that they can continue to provide online education to all enrolled students during the upcoming weeks.
- All lectures will be online. Colleges and Programs are reaching out to their students with more details.

- Students missing laboratory sessions will be given online work during April, with intense immersion in laboratory classes as soon as possible.
- Faculty and Staff should continue with their current work arrangements, either working from home, or if fulfilling an essential position, following the prepared schedules.

Early Graduation?

- Early graduation may be one of those concepts that initially looks like the best response to the shortage of health care professionals, until you study the logistics and accreditation standards needed to make this idea work.
- Midwestern University's academic deans and program directors have contacted all of our accreditation agencies to discuss these options. Only two accreditors have affirmatively responded that it is possible to graduate early under very strict conditions; all others have noted that all credit hours, classes and clinical rotations must be completed, either online or in a clinical setting, in order for a student to be certified to take licensing exams and graduate. The only program that is considering a slightly earlier graduation, on a case-by-case basis, is Cardiovascular Science, if students who have completed their requirements apply for an early graduation to begin employment.
- In addition, medical students are being advised by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) of the following concerns:
 - Allowing a graduate to work at a hospital other than their residency match is considered a match violation and may nullify their match.
 - There is a severe shortage of PPE and additional individuals in the hospital cannot be properly outfitted.
 - Hospitals have notified us that they are not able to accept early residents and interns; they are focusing on patient care and not ready for orientation of new physicians.
- Finally, early graduation could bring financial strain on students and we are monitoring this very carefully.

Arizona Governor Issued statement on 3/30/2020

- This afternoon the Arizona Governor's Executive Order titled "Stay Home, Stay Healthy, Stay Connected," is unique to Arizona and includes a strong focus on mental health. The order encourages Arizonans to participate in outdoor activities, as long as they are accompanied by social distancing measures. Additionally, it stresses the need for maintaining "social connectedness," a concern voiced by public health officials, especially among our senior population and those struggling with depression and suicide.

- The order exempts essential business, as outlined in the Governor's previous Executive Order last Monday. The new order takes effect Tuesday, March 31, 2020 at 5 pm and is in effect through April 30, 2020.

This evening remember to look for the beacons of light in your own lives. Think about the neighbors who have offered to shop for you, the friends and family who call to see if you are doing well. Be a beacon of light for your family and especially children that may be home for the balance of their school year. Remember the 1970's ballad, "You Light up My Life"? Let's get through these dark days together and be a beacon of hope and light for one another. Summer is just around the corner.

Be well.

Dr. G.