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Subject: New - Wednesday Weekly What-Nots

Dear Students,

Below, you will find a new approach to communicating with you based on student feedback. I hope you find the information helpful and I certainly welcome any comments/suggestions. I am inspired by how our LCOM community is responding to the pandemic and its social, educational and economic impact.

Our community also includes our wonderful alumni and I encourage you to [take a moment to read this heartwarming reflection by Dr. Halleh Akbarnia '98, in the LA Times...](#)

With gratitude,
Christa Zehle, MD

Wednesday Weekly What-Nots

Dear Students,

It is hard to believe that we are already in our 5th week of distance learning and the 4th week of the Vermont Stay Home Stay Safe order. This is not what any of us imagined and all of us who work in medical education miss you and each other. As we are adjusting to this current way of being, we are learning about opportunities and ways to do better.

It is a challenging time that impacts each and every one of us in different ways. There is a lot of uncertainty and things often change rapidly. There is also a significant economic impact, that will affect education and clinical care, however the extent of this is still largely unknown.

Communication, especially with our students, is a priority for me, however I have come to appreciate how challenging this is. We have done class specific emails, usually when things change, the dean is doing weekly emails and we are conducting town halls with the LCOM community and each class, however we can always do better. This week we asked student leaders to gather information and suggestions for improved communication during this unique situation.

The results:

- A weekly Med Ed update that includes information about what is happening across all classes and the clinical environment if possible.
- The weekly update should try to address
 - o What we know
 - o What we don't know
 - o Current recommendations for students
- Increased effort to keep the LCOM [Medical Student COVID-19 Information](#) website updated

So welcome to your **Wednesdays Weekly What-Nots** (open to suggestions for a catchier title, this is the best I can do right now) ☺

Class of 2020

What is happening with Graduation?

Graduation will occur virtually on May 17, 2020 and each student will have the opportunity to wear their free regalia and participate in a virtual hooding ceremony. The graduates will be mailed their full regalia (a gift by the LCOM Medical Alumni Association) to wear during the virtually ceremony if they wish. Students who wish to donate their gowns (either before or after the ceremony) to healthcare workers who may not have adequate personal protection equipment can do so. See [Gowns4Good](#), a program started by Than Moore, a PA in our Emergency department! We are also very excited that our Graduation speaker, [Dr. Joia Mukherjee](#), is able to participate in our virtual graduation as well.

Will LCOM students be graduating early?

We are working with the university to allow students who wish to graduate early the opportunity to do so. We are in the process of seeking permission from the Medical Curriculum Committee and the Committee on Advancement to make this possible.

Class of 2021/Class of 2022 (combined information)

What is our goal?

Our goal is to have students return to the clinical environment as soon as possible and when it meets the following criteria:

- It is safe for patients
- It is safe for students
- It is compliant with recommendations from national organizations (AAMC, LCME, etc.)
- It minimizes the stress and burden on the providers
- There is adequate PPE
- There are meaningful clinical experiences that the student can participate in and continue their clinical skill development (history taking, creating differential diagnoses, critical thinking, notes, presentations, etc.)

Who is making the decisions as to when students will re-enter clerkships?

The decision as to when students will re-enter the clinical environment is being informed by weekly conversations with national colleagues, guidelines from the AAMC and LCME and made collectively by all the stakeholders, including: the Dean's Office, clinical affiliate site leadership, clinical chairs, and individual practice group directors, in an effort to balance the competing priorities and allow students to re-enter when it is safe, when faculty feel they can support the educational mission, and when students can participate in meaningful clinical experiences that meet the goals and objectives of the clerkship.

When should I travel back to VT?

At this time anyone who is currently out of state would need to return and self-quarantine for 14 days. With the start date of clinical rotations frequently changing this can be difficult to anticipate, however we are doing everything we can to give you more than a two week notice so that you can make appropriate travel arrangements.

Will all the clinical environments open at the same time?

It is unlikely that all the various clinical environments will open simultaneously. It is possible that UVM Medical Center will be able to accommodate learners in the clinical environment before our clinical affiliate sites or community hospitals. We are preparing for this possibility. We recognize that this will impact clinical placement and housing for some students and we are preparing for this.

Class of 2021

When will clinical courses be available?

Currently the class of 2021 is scheduled to return on May 4, 2020 however we recognize that this will likely not be possible given the continuation of the Stay Home Stay Safe order and the current clinical climate. We are seeking permission from the Medical Curriculum Committee to begin on June 1, 2020 with the possibility of offering 2 week electives on May 18, 2020 if the clinical environment is able to accommodate students at that time.

When will OASIS open?

OASIS is schedule to open again for you Thursday, April 16, 2020

What if I am not enrolled in anything right now?

Please use the remainder of this week to enroll in a non-clinical course for the month of April and work with your course director to meet the goals and objectives in the time remaining. If you wish you can use vacation time for time when you do not want to be engaged in course work, however this is not required as long as you are able to meet the goals and objectives of the course selected for a given period of time.

Will there be any changes to the graduation requirements?

We anticipate that the delay in clinical activities will require some temporary modifications to our graduation requirements. We are exploring options and any final decisions will be made by the Medical Curriculum Committee which meets again on Tuesday, April 21, 2020.

Class of 2022

What has the Class of 2022 been doing for the last month?

The class of 2022 has been doing one of the following electives advanced integration credit:

- Medical Spanish
- COVID Reading Month
- Studying for Step 1
- Research/Scholarly project

When will clinical courses be available?

Currently the class of 2022 is scheduled to return on May 11, 2020 however we recognize that this will likely not be possible given the continuation of the Stay Home Stay Safe order and the current clinical climate. We are exploring various options which include telehealth training and non-clinical components of clerkships prior to re-entry.

What will the Class of 2022 be doing for the next 3 weeks, remotely (shaded areas represent possibilities given that further delay is likely)?

- 4/13: Flex week
- 4/20: Clerkship Orientation Bridge (1 week of clerkship credit)
- 4/27: Remote Bridges (Global Health, Palliative Care, Anesthesia) (1 week of clerkship credit)

- 5/4: Remote Bridges (Global Health, Palliative Care, Anesthesia) (1 week of clerkship credit)
- 5/11: Telehealth Advanced Integration Elective (Training for MS3 and MS4s to enter telehealth environment) (1 week of AI credit)
- 5/18: Telehealth Advanced Integration Elective (Training for MS3 and MS4s to enter telehealth environment) (1 week of AI credit)

What if I am in a different time zone other than Eastern Standard Time?

We are aware that students are in different time zones and we will do our best to accommodate this for bridge week and other course work being delivered remotely. Please be aware that we can do our best to accommodate national time zones, however accommodating international time zones is more difficult. If you have concerns about your ability to effectively engage in the curriculum based on your current time zone please contact clerkship coordinator, [Jacqueline Drouin](#).

What if I will be participating in clinical coursework in Vermont, however I do not have housing because I was supposed to be participating in the LIC or at our CT campus?

We are working with UVM Real Estate to obtain housing for any LCOM students who are displaced due to a change in their clinical placement.

What will happen to my LIC or CT scholarship?

We do not anticipate any change to scholarships awarded based on change in clinical placement.

What if I have delayed taking Step 1?

We are hopeful that all students will be able to take their Step 1 exam prior to entering the clinical environment.

Class of 2023

What will happen for the remainder of the semester?

The remainder of your Foundations 1 (spring semester) coursework will be delivered remotely. Medical Neuroscience (new course name) will begin on Monday, April 20, 2020 and is your final course of your first year of medical school.

What is planned for DIV?

We are currently exploring options including telehealth opportunities and additional DIV sessions in the fall.

What about clinical skills training?

We are exploring remote options including the use of remote standardized patients.

How have summer opportunities been impacted?

The summer global health program has been cancelled. The summer research fellowship program is still planning to occur, however may need to be modified with an emphasis on remote research and may include a remote research curriculum. The Office of Medical Student Education still plans to hire some summer interns with a focus on remote work.

All students

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Contact the Medical Services Team at StudentCOMServices (your question will be referred to the appropriate person) or sign up for a drop in meeting (see links below).

Sign up for a Drop-in Meeting:

- [Dean for Medical Education](#)
- [Deans for Students \(preclinical, clinical, CT Campus\)](#)
- [Director of Academic Achievement](#)
- [Director of Learning Environment](#)
- [Director of Student Wellbeing](#)

What if I want to volunteer my time to help?

Please see the LCOM [Medical Student COVID-19 Information](#) website for information about clinical and non-clinical volunteer opportunities. We appreciate the work of our LCOM Cares Service Corp Taskforce for all the work they are doing to centralize and communicate volunteer opportunities.

How are the clinical environments doing?

The clinical environments are pretty stressed at the moment, however advanced preparedness and rapid response has helped to flatten the curve. We are looking at options for how to communicate additional information about the clinical environment for you so stay tuned.

We are grateful for your patience and understanding during this stressful and challenging situation. Please remember to take care of yourselves and each other. Stay safe and cozy (borrowed that from one of your colleagues) 😊

With gratitude,
Christa Zehle and our incredible OMSE team!