

**From:** LCOM Office of the Dean <[COMOfficeOfTheDean@med.uvm.edu](mailto:COMOfficeOfTheDean@med.uvm.edu)>

**Sent:** Friday, April 17, 2020 4:08 PM

**Subject:** Message from Rick Page to Larner Community

Dear Larner Community:

As another week of working remotely for most of us, and physical distancing for all, comes to a close, we are starting to see signs that our efforts are making a difference. Even with a record number of deaths for one day in New York City, and a staggering total of over 33,000 deaths nationally, the number of new cases being hospitalized may have reached the peak. Here in Vermont, the peak of our surge is modeled to have either just passed or will be coming up in the next couple of weeks, but we can express some relief that the overall mortality in our state remains lower than feared (35 this morning). Even that relatively low number is heartbreaking.

Any success that we are seeing, and numbers that are turning out to be lower than originally predicted, are direct results of ongoing efforts that cannot yet be relaxed. Fundamental processes of physical distancing and hand hygiene remain critical, now supplemented by universal masking. We can't let our guard down now, even as we look toward the future.

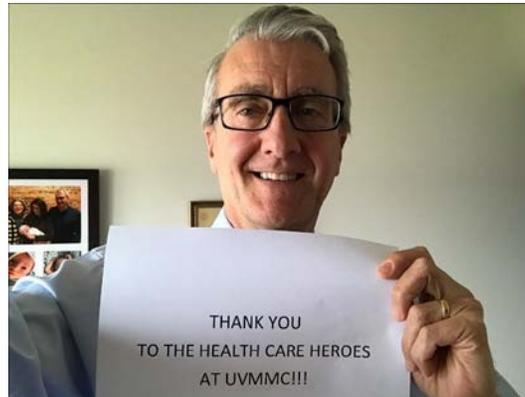
**So when might we get back to normal?** None of us knows that answer, nor can we predict what "normal" will be going forward. For the foreseeable future, life will be different. Any relaxation in restrictions would depend on complex analysis, and consideration will depend on a number of factors, including availability of ample personal protection equipment (PPE) and availability of rapid serologic testing. Fortunately, there is reason for optimism in both of those areas. In terms of medical school operations, focusing on education and research, here is what we know:

- Ever since March 18, 2020 all clinical education activities have been suspended here at LCOM and throughout the nation. Of course there is impatience to resume clinical education; this cannot be achieved unless we can ensure that there is adequate PPE for health care workers and the environment is safe for the students and, of course our patients. Furthermore, we must be sensitive to the overall stress of the frontline clinical workforce. We will be monitoring the situation closely and, at present, cannot determine a date for resumption of activities.
- With regard to research, we are maintaining essential research functions, including research related to COVID-19. The new University of Vermont Vice President for Research, Dr. Kirk Dombrowski, is charging a task force to examine a staged resumption of research activities, when possible, throughout the University. We are fortunate that Senior Associate Dean, Gordon Jensen, M.D., Ph.D., is participating in this process, as well as other members of the LCOM community.

**As always, we should all be grateful to our outstanding staff.** With all the current instability, we received some short-term reassurance from President Garimella, with his recent [letter](#). Our staff and faculty have pitched in to help in this crisis in many ways. Our own Eric Gagnon, Director of Facilities Administration and Projects and Gino Trevisani, M.D., Associate Professor of Surgery, both serve as Colonels in the Vermont Army National Guard. Col. Gagnon is assigned as the Commander of the Garrison Support Command and Dr. Trevisani is assigned as the State Surgeon and Medical Detachment Commander. The two were recently activated, and each played a major role in designing, building (in four days) and staffing a 400-bed State of Vermont Alternate Healthcare Facility located at the

Champlain Valley Exposition Center in Essex Junction. This effort has been featured nationally in [The Atlantic](#).

I have the honor of serving on the Board of Trustees for the UVM Medical Center, the site where many of our faculty are on the front line, working with the talented and dedicated nurses and other staff. In support of the frontline heroes, the Board is providing pictures of ourselves with signs of encouragement. Clearly, my talents do not include making signs and taking selfies, but the sentiment is there! (Note that I managed to provide my new granddaughter, Eliza Jean, her first photobomb.)



In closing, I remind all of us that we will get through this crisis, together. Things will not always be this way. In the meantime, please look out for yourself and others. And stay safe.

Rick

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