

From: LCOM Office of the Dean

Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 2:39 PM

Subject: ON BEHALF OF DEAN PAGE: A Thanksgiving Message

Dear Larner Community,

Thanksgiving is almost here. Typically, this would prompt anticipation of gatherings with family and friends, but this is a holiday like none other. Even though there may be light at the end of what is becoming a very long tunnel, we must acknowledge that this has been a very tough year.

COVID-19 has disrupted the very fabric of life. I don't know anyone who isn't connected to those who have fallen ill or even died. And everyday events like going out for dinner or to a movie seem like distant memories. The financial impact is affecting everyone, but is inequitable, afflicting especially those who are marginalized or already have limited resources. And further related to justice and equity, our society is finally reckoning, painfully, with our legacy of systemic racism. Most recently, our clinical activities have been horribly disrupted by a cyber-attack even as we prepare for a surge in the pandemic. And finally, this is occurring in an environment so polarized that even science, medicine and public health have been politicized.

Here at our College, many of you have shared your perspectives with me through multiple town halls. Our education programs continue, but clearly not with the rich personal interaction of the past. Our faculty are under tremendous stress. And our staff are especially affected. There is anxiety and frustration over pay cuts. Child care and schooling present major challenges. I hear you. And more important, I am joined by an outstanding group of associate deans who are working with me to address the issues at hand. I wish we had easy solutions, but we will do all we can.

Even as we go through these ongoing challenges, our community has responded. Our learners have accommodated the curricular changes with a can-do attitude, as they progress toward their degrees. Our faculty, likewise, have had to respond to lab closures, teaching adjustments and clinical disruptions, and have kept moving forward. And our staff, on whom we all depend every day, have stepped up and carried on in the face of ongoing adversity. I am amazed by the spirit, talent and commitment of all of you. And I am profoundly grateful.

I am also hopeful. This week we heard of a second vaccine trial that appears to be safe and over 90% effective. This is a very big deal. Initial vaccinations should begin this calendar year, with broad distribution in the spring. We just need to keep up our diligence through masks, physical distancing and avoiding gatherings. I know this is difficult, and we are all fatigued. My wife, Jeannie, and I had hoped to be with our new granddaughter on her first Thanksgiving, but instead we'll use Zoom and make do. All of us have to sacrifice now to assure that we and others are around in future years, to make up for the hugs we lost in 2020.

So as I reflect on a Thanksgiving like no other, I am thankful for all of you. Our Larner College of Medicine, now approaching its 200th year, will emerge from this current situation even stronger, thanks to our people. Please stay strong and stay safe, and know that you are appreciated.

My best wishes to you and your loved ones for continued health and a happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,
Rick

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