

From: [LCOM Office of the Dean](#)
To: [Gilwee, Vicki M](#)
Subject: Message from Dean Page to the Larner Community
Date: Tuesday, September 14, 2021 8:26:17 AM

Dear Larner Community,

As summer has come to a close, and the fall semester is in full swing, this seems like an apt time to acknowledge our very real challenges, while making note of positive developments.

The 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks triggered personal memories, as we remembered and honored those who lost their lives, especially the first responders. The world was forever changed. And now we are afflicted by a pandemic that we hoped was receding back in June, before the delta variant became widespread in our country. We are fortunate that Vermont has fared so well, but even our state is in the midst of a surge that is having a major impact on our health system and all caregivers at a time when stress and burnout are common.

We must take care of our community in order to take care of others. Our College recognizes that we are all vulnerable and must give a priority to self-care and wellness. There should be no stigma associated with mental illness or the need for psychological support. Tools and resources are available for members of our community to help recognize and assist in the setting of psychological crisis, including the risk for suicide. We are committed to equitable mental health support for every member of our community—students (medical and graduate), staff and faculty—and nobody should feel that they are alone. Please note the resources listed below.

In dealing with COVID, I am tremendously proud of our University response and especially that of the students, faculty and staff of our College. We need to remain vigilant even as we enjoy the remarkable improvement of life on campus this fall compared to last year. Dean Jan Carney and I will be sending a separate email later this week on this important topic.

Our education of the next generation of physicians and biomedical scientists has resumed with in-person classes. I was recently contacted by Senator Bernie Sanders' office with a request for the Senator to meet with our medical class of 2025, and this was accomplished on Friday. After a surprise rendition of "Happy Birthday to You" by the class (complete with balloons and party hats), the Senator spent over an hour in serious conversation. He emphasized health care as a human right, the importance of primary care, and noted with pride that funding for the [National Health Service Corps](#), which provides loan forgiveness and scholarships to primary care health clinicians serving in health professional shortage areas, has been tripled. Toward the end of a lively discussion that brought into focus many problems with our health care system, one of our students asked the Senator what made him optimistic for the future. Senator Sanders responded beautifully, highlighting the following: childhood poverty has been cut in half; food insecurity has been markedly reduced; and, in record time, biomedical scientists have created vaccines that are saving countless lives.

As we closed the session, I mentioned that the class in attendance is further reason for optimism; this is the first medical class in a century to apply during a pandemic. Like first responders and

generations of physicians before them, they moved toward a crisis in service to others.

I have commented before that my hope for the future always increases when I spend time with our medical and graduate students. I ask that you all join me in reflecting on the fact that, even in the face of adversity, their education, our research and clinical care missions have continued undaunted. These accomplishments were possible thanks to our dedicated students, faculty and staff.

Please take care of yourselves and each other, and take the opportunity to thank our staff for their contributions during this Staff Appreciation week. Together, we are making a difference.

Sincerely,

Rick

If you, or someone you know, are in need of professional counseling please do not hesitate to contact UVM's Counseling and Psychiatry Services at (802) 656-3340 (for students) or Invest EAP at (802) 864-EAPØ (3270) or toll free at 1-866-660-9533 (for staff and faculty assistance).

September is national Suicide Prevention Month; the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. This very short [video](#) provides common-sense tools to recognize and intervene in the case of potential suicide.

Richard L. Page, M.D.
Dean, The Robert Larner M.D. College of Medicine
The University of Vermont
Given E-126, 89 Beaumont Avenue
Burlington, VT 05405

Office: 802-656-2156

Fax: 802-656-8577

richard.page@med.uvm.edu