

From the Office of the Dean

Dear Colleagues,

We continue to work on several key areas at the University level and the dental school level. These include financial considerations and resumption of services.

4.24.20 KEY UPDATES:**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS****ITEM 1 (as of 4/15/20).**

The leadership groups continue to look at the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The models are based on a variety of scenarios that still remain unpredictable. The models are thought of in best case versus worst case scenarios. On 4/15/20 we all received the communication from President Monaco regarding the “Impact of the pandemic on university finances and operations.”

Some of the highlights included:

Hiring

We will implement an immediate moratorium on new faculty and staff hiring including Tufts and agency temporary staff. Externally funded positions are exempt from this moratorium. Exceptions to this, which will be rare, must be approved by senior university leaders.

Salaries

We will enact a wage and salary freeze for all faculty and staff, except as provided for by contract. This includes a freeze on otherwise scheduled merit cycle increases and market adjustments. This does not include salary changes related to any approved faculty and staff promotions.

Discretionary Spending

Effective immediately, we will be suspending all new discretionary spending, including, for example, travel, food, conferences, furniture, and non-essential facilities spending. Spending to maintain essential university operations will continue.

Capital Projects

All planned capital projects will be put on hold indefinitely. Current projects in advanced stages of construction, such as the Cummings Center, will continue when permitted by government authorities.

ITEM 2 (as of 4/24/20).

All of the efforts above are considered Tier I efforts. Each unit at the university is now being asked to look at their FY 21 budgets. In our case we anticipate a phased/titrated clinical opening. The ability to become “fully operational” could take anywhere from 6 months up to a year. These scenarios will have a major impact on our budget and we will be meeting with university leadership to decide on how to manage/mitigate the budget shortfalls.

RESUMPTION OF SERVICES

PLEASE NOTE the Massachusetts Dental Society has asked that all dental practices continue to only see emergency patients through May 18. Our leadership team will reconvene to look at our new clinic opening date early next week. Please do assume for now we remain as is with our emergency clinic operation through at least May 18.

The “resumption” teams (Academic Continuity, Clinical Continuity, Operational Continuity, Research Continuity, Financial Continuity and Health and Safety) continue to meet at TUSDM to plan for resumption of services in our key mission areas-education, clinical care, research, community outreach and service. We will rest the start date based on the new Directive. As per in the past the new start date will be an aspiration that will be dictated by many factors (national and local guidelines, supply lines of PPE and infection control needs, health and safety protocols for all involved etc). Please recognize, as in the past, this date might well change-based on current modelling in MA we are potentially preparing for further delays through the month of May. This group has come up with a model that would allow for resumption of services on floors 2, 3 and 4. The model accounts for screening, social distancing, and best practices (PPE, protocols, health and safety, and infection control). I thank all the faculty, staff, residents and students that are on these teams. There is a realization that at any time that we resume services we could also have to resume “emergency only” services should there be another large “wave” and another “stay at home” mandate.

Details of these plans are being shared amongst school-wide committees, and at student/resident/faculty/staff town halls.

CLINICAL SERVICES

Continuity of care-emergencies.

We will continue to keep the clinics open for emergency care provided by a Clinical Continuity team.

Please refer to the emergency call guidelines that have been circulated to all students/residents and faculty.

As of 4/22, 281 patients have been seen in the emergency clinic. A record audit of the patients seen indicate that over 91% needed to be seen. Dr. McGarry, faculty, residents and staff have done an outstanding job running the emergency clinic. The phone system has received over 225 calls so far and has worked well due to the call center and faculty cooperation. This arrangement has reduced the burden on the hospital. Thank you to all who are taking care of these patients.

EXTERNAL CLINICAL ACTIVITIES

External rotations and externships etc., will be cancelled up to **May 18, 2020**. Our Academic Affairs Team/Dr. Nehring/Dr. Yered will inform site directors of this change. Please contact them for any issues that arise. This group is now starting to look at the impact of COVID-19 on these clinical activities during the remainder of May, and for May-September.

ACADEMIC PLANS

1. Didactic programming (DMD/AG). In person classes have stopped and online/distance education will continue. Where possible activities to engage students/residents in clinical cases/care will start to be implemented
2. Preclinical Programming. Preclinical exercises have stopped. If guidelines regarding “stay at home”/numbers of people in gatherings are relaxed, we may be able to restart preclinical exercises **PRIOR to May 8, 2020** (Our seniors have been given special clearance to complete preclinical competencies and are expected back). Classes will continue to be modified as possible (consolidation, focus on key points etc.). Time can be made up for lost exercises once we start up again by using “unscheduled” times-evenings, weekends, some “vacation” time over the summer/last week before winter break etc. Faculty and staff who have down time from these shutdowns right now will rally to help to make up lost time.
3. Clinical Programming. As clinical operations are closed, the Clinical Progress Committee and the Advanced Graduate Education Committee and PG program directors are developing ways to continue some aspects of clinical learning through case discussion, reviews etc. These will be communicated with the student groups in the coming weeks.

Deans Kasberg, Ramesh and Thompson continue to hear from Class Leadership groups to obtain student feedback and modifications will continue to be made based on this feedback. In the past weeks several Town Hall Meetings have been held to address student concerns.

Program Directors will meet with residents to obtain their feedback.

RESEARCH OPERATIONS

The University continues to release new guidelines for researchers. These will continue to be distributed by Dean Kugel and his team. Any plans for resumption of activities will also be shared when appropriate.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Dr. Pastan continues to guide yoga and drop in meditation via Zoom on Tuesdays and Thursdays. She is available for student meetings through Zoom; email her to set up an appointment christina.pastan@tufts.edu. You can also follow her [@drpastanspaceofmind](https://www.instagram.com/drpastanspaceofmind) on Instagram for connection and offerings of grounding and self-care.

Boston Campus students in all programs can continue to access Counseling services now available remotely through Talk One2One. The phone number to access this service is 1-800-756-3124. This is both a 24-hour emergency helpline as well as a way to access the mental health counselors assigned to the Boston campus for ongoing counseling.

The University has a resource pass that can help with questions you might have around “Public Health & Medical Issues FAQ” <https://coronavirus.tufts.edu/health-and-medical/>

If anyone has a concern about a COVID-19 Positive test/exposure please email: covid19@tufts.edu, or e-mail robert.kasberg@tufts.edu , Morton.Rosenberg@tufts.edu understanding that confidentiality will be maintained.

ACCESS TO ONE KNEELAND STREET

Recently members of our community have entered One Kneeland for a variety of reasons not realizing that access to all healthcare facilities has been limited. Access has been limited to allow only essential faculty, staff, students and residents into the building. This is mandated to maintain a safe environment. Please do not enter the building unless a direct supervisor, Chair or Dean has granted you permission. Guidelines and time for entry will be given to you at that time. Please note that your I.D.s may not grant you access as in the past.

TRAVEL GUIDELINES

Please stay up to date with the University travel guidelines <https://announcements.tufts.edu/announcement/travel-guidance-related-covid-19-coronavirus> including the Local and National restrictions on travel.

We encourage you (faculty, staff, residents and students) not to travel at this time due to the changing circumstances.

Please also note the “two-week” self-quarantine notification for anyone returning to MA. This is especially critical as it pertains to any resumption of programming.

EXTERNAL ACTIONS/RESOURCES

1. Federal plans for “re-opening” were shared at the end of last week. Many States will follow these guidelines in one form or another. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>
2. I listened to the virtual town hall with Mayor Walsh and Dr. P. Slavin on 4.23.20. It has been recorded and gives us an idea about where the City of Boston is with the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an interesting reflection on where we are with the healthcare challenge in the City of Boston. <https://virtualtownhallwithmayormartyw.splashthat.com>
3. Many of you are participating in Zoom Meetings and are using creative “virtual backgrounds”. Please see the attached using our “We are Jumbo Strong, we are Boston Strong” saying. <https://tufts.box.com/s/gtrnypi3qx4shit8iahoqy9qedmr1xg5>. The ad-hoc “Design Team” for this project was compiled by: Dr. Alberto Almodovar (PG-Y3), Dr. Po Lee (PG-Y2) and Dr. Irina Dragan.

Sincerely,
Dean Nadeem Karimbux, DMD, MMSc

REFLECTION: FROM THE MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY

This week I asked members of our “community” (faculty, staff, student, alumnus) to answer the following questions.

- How are you balancing the “new normal”: working remotely while managing to be “at home.”
- What do you miss most about coming in to TUSDM/going to work?
- What short reflection do you have about this health care crisis?

*“1. How are you balancing the ‘new normal: working remotely while managing to be at home.’
As a postgraduate course director, I am looking at this transition as an opportunity to explore a different format: asynchronous distance teaching (via CANVAS). Together with Dr. Noshir Mehta and Dr. Hana Sadi, we adapted the ‘Management of Complex Cases’ class accordingly. Residents are reviewing a short video and then collaborate in teams to compile evidence-based discussions to questions pertinent to the proposed clinical case. For every assignment a winning team is being selected showcasing their example answers.*

2. What do you miss most about coming in to TUSDM/going to work?

The TUSDM family - the interaction with all colleagues (faculty, staff and students). I also miss meeting with peers from other universities and sharing best practices.

3. What short reflection do you have about this health care crisis?

I think this is an opportunity to test our resilience and capacity to adapt. Our field is being challenged in particular, but as dentists we are creative individuals. I am sure we will come out of this crisis stronger with innovative and well-thought solutions."

-Dr. Irina Dragan DG15, DI19

"I miss the lively, warm atmosphere at TUSDM and personal interactions with the students, staff and faculty. I also miss my clinical endodontic practice, the fulfilment I receive from in treating and caring for patients alongside working with my clinical team. I have been balancing this new way of working at home by maintaining a routine similar to what I had before this situation by exercising early in the morning, keeping my work hours consistent with my usual schedule and creating a "hard stop" at 5pm to fully engage in family life. Our world is experiencing this pandemic together and we are all vulnerable. I have been reflecting on how vulnerability can empower us to be courageous, resilient and more empathetic to the grief and struggles of others."

-Dr C. Pastan. D91, DG94

"As these days have been quickly, yet slowly, passing by, I have found myself overindulging in Netflix and the ever-so-popular Nintendo video game, "Animal Crossing" which was released when this pandemic was just beginning to sweep our nation. I have also taken on new hobbies such as crocheting and playing guitar and have joined a study club to go over complex cases with a small group of dental students and dentists from all throughout the country. Although we have the luxury of "Zoom" calls, I miss seeing everyone at Tufts on daily basis: the students, faculty, staff, and my patients. My group practice zoom calls is something I look forward to every Friday; it's relieving to still be able to see everyone's faces even if it's only once a week. COVID-19 has unexpectedly changed everyone's lives in the past few months, and I hope that when this is all over, we can appreciate technology for keeping us connected to our loved ones, but realize that it cannot be a replacement for personal connection."

-Airy Choi D20

"I am trying to remain positive during this time, but I miss coming into work and seeing my coworkers, students and faculty. Working from home has been extremely difficult because I am not computer savvy. I have had to learn about zoom, WebEx, jabber and all of these different software programs. I am fortunate to have team members that help me.

I miss doing the stairs! I am gaining weight, but I really miss my coworkers and students.

My thoughts are that the covid-19 virus has kept us still. Building our family relationships to become stronger, and to appreciate that during these difficult times, so many people have lost their jobs and I thank God and I am very grateful that I still have a job!

Thank you, Dean!"

-Cheryl Coke (DA, Department of Periodontology)

"The new normal, balancing working remotely, a.k.a. working from home is hard! Because of my 2-hour commute I was up every day at 4am, I found it hard to sleep any later than that. It was frustrating because I felt like the beginning of my day was being wasted. I set a goal to turn this crisis into something good. I still get up early, around 5am, but instead of getting in the car to drive I am now training for a half marathon. I exercise and run every morning. It preps me to start the workday. I found it important to set a schedule and give myself timelines to complete projects. Trying to sit in front of the computer all day is difficult, so I have set 2-hour increments (usually one of my 5 Dogs needs a potty run by then) and then I get up, stretch and reset.

I found myself really missing my teams and my work family. We have set up zoom calls to stay in touch and just 'see' each other. It will be nice once we are back in the same place physically but thank goodness for today's technology we can stay connected until then. We have even set up a Friday 5 o'clock Coffee Happy Hour call just to hang out.

Reflecting on the current situation around the world it really makes you appreciate the lives we have. The time we have to spend with loved ones and what is truly important. I hope it has made more people appreciate the healthcare workers and what they sacrifice on daily basis to help others. Everyone from first responders, doctors and nurses and the facility workers in the hospitals. They are truly heroes."

-Nicole Wilkinson, Practice Manager 12th Floor

"They say adversity brings out the best in people - I beg to differ. For me, the past few weeks have been more about survival than self-growth. I remember why I chose to be a Pediatric Dentist. I love working with children, helping them conquer their fears of the dentist and having a successful dental visit. I sorely miss the challenge and fulfillment of a life-long career of dedication and service to others.

During the past few weeks I have alternated between going to the office where I "pretend" to work and curling up in bed with my bullmastiffs (breed of dog that looks like a pony), using impolite language, when the internet cuts out during the climax of my current Netflix binge watch.

Sometimes the dishes begin to accumulate in the sink, the laundry room overflows and the bed doesn't get made because I need to rush out to my 'pretend office.' In actuality, it has become a great escape and safe haven from the 5 adult children and two dogs that have chosen to hunker down and significantly alter the calm, controlled and simple environment of an empty nester life.

My husband, Jon Golub, D'85, Tufts Ortho '87, on the other hand, has painted the entire house (with scaffolding), mulched the entire yard, opened the pool, finished the basement and done some minor plumbing work (this house wasn't made for 9 of us). He needs to accomplish something. I myself am satisfied with my 'pretend office.'

Now more than ever, we are thankful for our friends and family, including our Tufts Dental family. A new highlight of our weekly routine now includes the lighting of shabbat candles and ritual blessings with our dear friend, Eli Davidyan, D'85.

I have attended one to many virtual funerals as a result of this nasty virus. It has just been heartbreaking. We here in Northern New Jersey have gotten hit very hard. Personally, I cannot wait for the day when my 'pretend office' can get back to its chaotic tumultuous self, filled with life, laughter and screaming children."

-Dr. Jamie Diamant-Golub, D'87



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