Dear colleagues,

As another week draws to a close, I wanted to share a few updates on our school’s ongoing institutional response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I also wanted to remind you that, in between these weekly updates, you can check the COVID-19 information pages maintained by the university, BUMC, and GSDM for more information. Additionally, please do follow GSDM on social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) as we are frequently sharing information, resources, and stories about our community on these platforms.

**Action Required: Predoctoral Student Survey**
We know that many of our students may have chosen to leave the Boston area during this time of distance education. We are asking all students to complete this brief survey to share with us their current geographic location. Collecting this data will help us to better plan for the future as we prepare to return to Boston and move towards resuming “normal” operations at our school. Click here to access this brief survey.

Postdoctoral residents should inform their program directors of their current location.

**Clinical Operations**
As many of you know, our Patient Treatment Centers and Dental Health Centers are licensed as ambulatory surgical centers through the state Department of Public Health (DPH), so we are obligated to follow DPH guidance with regards to our ability to provide patient care during the coronavirus pandemic, as well as the guidance of the University and the Office of the President. On March 15, 2020, the state Commissioner of Health issued an order requiring all ambulatory surgical centers to postpone or cancel non-essential, elective procedures effective March 18, 2020. We cannot resume in-person patient care at our facilities until this order is lifted.

Additionally, we are obligated to follow the recommendations of the U.S. Center for Disease Control with regards to the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for the resumption of in-person patient care. We are actively working to acquire the required PPE, but we are also continuing to wait for new guidelines and protocols to be published.

We are developing plans to resume care as soon as we are allowed by the state DPH and the university, and as soon as we have acquired the appropriate PPE. As part of our plan to resume care, we will be enacting procedures to ensure we are in compliance with the most current social-distancing guidelines. However, while we remain in constant communication.
with state public health officials, we have not received official notification of when the order will be lifted, and thus cannot definitively say when we will be able to resume in-person patient care. We will continue to keep the GSDM community updated as this situation evolves.

**White Coat Ceremony**

In accordance with the university’s April 7 announcement regarding changes to the summer session, the University has cancelled all events scheduled to be held on the Charles River Campus in June, July, or August. Unfortunately, this includes our White Coat Ceremony, which was scheduled to be held on July 11. However, the university has retained the July 11 date on its calendar, as they will be reevaluating events on a month-to-month basis as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve.

While we do, of course, want to hold this significant ceremony for our students as we normally would, the health and safety of our students and their families is of paramount importance. We are collaborating closely with University leadership to monitor the situation, and will adhere to all guidance issued by federal, state, and local authorities. Please rest assured that the induction of our DMD Class of 2022 and DMD AS Class of 2021 into the Patient Treatment Center will be acknowledged and celebrated one way or the other.

**New Resident & Student Orientations**

Currently, we are planning to hold our orientation for new postdoctoral residents as scheduled, beginning on July 1, 2020.

For incoming predoctoral students, we have pushed back the start date of orientation by one week – from July 20 to July 27 – and have shortened the overall orientation program to one week. Sessions that are unable to be accommodated during that week will be delivered later in the semester. We are currently planning to hold the 2020 Professional Ceremony on July 31, 2020, but it is possible that we may need to modify the event structure in order to comply with social-distancing guidelines.

We are still determining the best way to deliver orientation – e.g., in person, virtually, or through a hybrid approach – and will share more information when it is available.

**Admissions Update**

Given the COVID-19 situation, many entering students have required intensive, personalized guidance and support. About a month ago, Admissions issued an online survey to all entering predoctoral students and postdoctoral residents to assess individuals’ preparations for matriculation. The response rate was excellent, and the predoctoral and postdoctoral admissions managers continue to collect updated information on an ongoing basis. The information shared by our entering students and residents enables Admissions to identify resources and solutions for some, or provide information and reassurance. Due to the evolving nature of the COVID-19 situation, definitive answers are not necessarily available. Next week, Admissions will send a memo with updates and enrollment information to all entering students and residents.

**Task Force – Planning for the 2020-21 Academic Year**

As I [announced yesterday](#), I have created a new task force, co-chaired by Drs. Margaret Errante and Alexander Bendayan, that is charged with developing a comprehensive plan for the 2020-2021 Academic Year at the Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine (GSDM) in response to the effects of COVID-19 on normal operations. The task force held its first meeting today (April 24), and the chairs of each working group – Academic, Clinical, Research, Office of the Dean, Global and Population Health / Student Affairs, Admissions, and Innovation – are now identifying the members of their respective groups. A preliminary
report is due to me on May 20, 2020.

“Frequently Asked Questions”
Thank you to everyone who is submitting questions about our school’s COVID-19 response. The current list of questions (and answers!) is on our website – you can access the page directly by clicking here, and it is also linked from our COVID-19 information page. We are working now on answering the questions that have come in over the last week. We will continue to update this page on a rolling basis – both to add new information and to potentially update answers based on new or evolving information. If you have a question that’s not answered on the current list, you can submit it through this web form.

Thank you again for everything each of you are doing to support our school, our community, and our profession. Mrs. Hutter and I continue to keep all of you in our thoughts and prayers and to send our best wishes to you and your loved ones for your continued health and safety.

Sincerely,

Dean Hutter