



President's Office

Letters to the UMB Community

COVID-19 General Updates

April 24, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I write today without answers to some basic questions about the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) short-term future. When will episodic telework end? Will classes, clinical rotations, and campus events proceed as planned in the fall? What steps will UMB take to close the pending fiscal gap caused by COVID-19's impacts? As the head of a higher education institution - particularly one with Knowledge as one of its Core Values - it's not easy to say "I don't know."

But here I am, doing just that. Rest assured, my leadership team and I meet daily to review the most current COVID-19 information, consider what issues must be addressed now and which need more consideration, and execute on those decisions that are ripe. We consult constantly with our sister institutions, the University System of Maryland (USM) and the University of Maryland Medical System, to remain in alignment and incorporate best practices whenever possible. And we continue to hear from you through your shared governance bodies, executive leadership, and virtual events like my recent Lunch with the President brown bag meeting. We strive to be transparent, even in the midst of uncertainty.

So in that spirit, here is what I can announce today:

I recently appointed a Research Advisory Task Force to develop a plan to restart on-campus research activities as soon we have determined how to do that safely.

I was honored to be named to the [USM COVID-19 Research & Innovation Task Force](#) . This group will work with business and industry to help USM and UMB move its expertise to scale in meeting the health and economic challenges associated with the pandemic.

Episodic telework remains in place for the foreseeable future in accordance with my [April 9 letter](#).

We await more information from the state of Maryland and USM about potential short- and long-term budget cuts. This information is needed before making significant financial decisions. In addition, we are pursuing potential funding relief from Congress and federal agencies.

All didactic educational activities scheduled for this summer will be conducted virtually.

Of course, although some short-term outcomes are uncertain, this has not prevented us from looking ahead at how we can achieve our mission moving forward. Given the massive changes that have occurred and the many yet to follow, it is not possible for UMB to go "back to normal." Death rates in Maryland are not yet declining; the curve is not yet behind us. So while returning to campus is not yet an option, we are preparing for a strategic recovery from COVID-19, restoring key operations as quickly as possible while seeking opportunities to advance, grow, evolve, and innovate to strengthen UMB in the long term. This strategic recovery will be anchored by our Core Values and guided by key principles such as

ensuring the safety of our students, staff, faculty, and visitors; maintaining our high standards in educating our students; and valuing the contributions of our people - our most important asset. I will announce further plans about UMB's strategic recovery program next month.

I hope that all of you are safe and careful wherever you are. And to those UMB health care professionals, researchers, and staff supporting the fight against COVID-19, please know that you have the deep gratitude and well wishes of the entire UMB community.

Sincerely,

Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS
Interim President

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620 W. Lexington St., Baltimore, MD 21201 | 410-706-3100
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