



Feb. 3, 2021

Dear UMB Community,

If you are like me, you are more than ready to be out of “unprecedented times,” as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Ready to get back to when we might pass each other on campus, say hi while picking up lunch, and perhaps travel to see friends and family. I’m grateful that the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) community continues to be on the forefront in the work to end COVID-19, from analyzing some of the first samples of the virus and completing the first vaccine trials, to developing new ways to serve our West Baltimore community. As we continue to fight COVID-19, we will likely need more members of the UMB community to take on new and different roles to meet new challenges.

For UMB, where our mission calls on us to improve the human condition, responding to pandemics isn’t new. In 1918, as Baltimore faced the Spanish flu, *“the health authorities have been obliged to apply drastic measures to limit the spread of the disease. All schools, colleges, theatres, moving picture parlors, concerts, public meetings and churches have been closed. Hospitals have been closed to visitors and their activities have been materially diminished. ... In the city, and also in the counties, the physicians have been overwhelmed with work. ... In common with other institutions the University of Maryland [Baltimore] was obliged to discontinue its classes.”*\*

How eerily similar that sounds to today — though thankfully, this generation of students isn’t also in the middle of a World War, and we have the technology to continue classes. In thinking about past challenges, I was proud to see that UMB had a role in addressing the Spanish flu: *“At the University, students in the nursing program and in the School of Medicine were called upon to assist in the hospitals connected to the University — University Hospital, Mercy Hospital, and Maryland General Hospital — and private practices around the city as cases of the flu grew and greater numbers of doctors and nurses succumbed to the virus.”*

So, we are actually in *precedented* times with this history of UMB stepping in to help during a pandemic. It’s on that proud legacy that I ask you to think about your role in helping our community face — and end — COVID-19. We must adhere to the highest standards of safety by wearing masks, keeping appropriately distanced, and washing hands. We can serve as myth-busters and encourage

folks to take the vaccine when available. We also can and will do more — as individuals and as an institution. UMB is working on expanding our support for vaccination efforts and will ask some people to step away from their usual roles at UMB to staff these efforts. If called upon, I hope that you will step up to serve.

Beating this pandemic will require additional flexibility and adjustments as the situation changes. I am assured that this community will continue in its history of service to others.

Stay healthy and safe.

Sincerely,

**Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**

*President*

\*"Historical Insights: COVID-19 and the 1918 Spanish Flu," Health Sciences and Human Services Library

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This note was authorized for distribution to the University of Maryland, Baltimore community by the Office of the President.

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