



Dear UMB Community,

The severity of the COVID-19 pandemic is very real, with rates of infection rising across the country — and though we may be tired of the virus, physical distancing, and taking precautions, the virus is not tiring of us. The University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) has made decisions based on forecasts and assumptions of the virus' impact, and I feel absolutely confident that we made the right decisions and are on the right course when it comes to keeping each other healthy and safe. We will continue our plans for the [spring semester](#), and we continue to plan to telework through at least March 31, 2021.

Now, with Thanksgiving and other holidays around the corner, we each need a plan to mitigate COVID-19 exposure risks in our celebrations and our everyday activities. We must remain vigilant by wearing masks, washing our hands frequently, and physically distancing. With the holidays coming soon and reports about [small social gatherings](#) leading to more cases, I hope that you'll carefully think about how to minimize exposure risk to yourself and your loved ones. Just yesterday, I listened to a National Public Radio interview with Dr. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, about vaccine development and the surge in U.S. coronavirus cases. He noted that he is canceling his family's large Thanksgiving celebration and that gathering outdoors is much safer than indoor activities.

UMB will close for the Thanksgiving recess Nov. 26-29. We *strongly urge* UMB students and employees who will be on campus, at Universities at Shady Grove, or Donaldson Brown Riverfront Event Center between Nov. 30 and Dec. 18 to obtain a COVID-19 diagnostic test within that period. We continue to monitor what is happening in Maryland and around the nation, and we will make adjustments as needed for the safety of the UMB community.

I consider UMB students and employees to be leaders within Maryland and thank each of you in advance for your compliance with testing requirements and for your commitment to keeping each other healthy and safe, however difficult it can feel at times. Our vigilance to best practices to minimize risk hopefully will translate to celebrating many more holidays with our loved ones in the years to come.

Sincerely,

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

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

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