

Dear Ostrow Community:

It's been nearly 50 days since L.A. County mandated its "Safer at Home" social distancing campaign to curb the spread of coronavirus. And I've been seeing photos on the news of empty spaces across what is usually a teeming Los Angeles — wide-open freeways, Hollywood Boulevard in desolation, sun-soaked boardwalks that have been all but deserted. The images are extraordinary in their own right, but they're also inspiring. It's no secret that we live in divisive times. The fact that so much of our country was able to come together and share this enormous sacrifice to protect each other is an inspiration. It's also proof that we are more connected than divided, which is comforting in these times.

Speaking of our connection, we officially launched the [USC Dentistry, OT and PT Student Emergency Fund](#) to help support our students hardest hit by the Covid-19 crisis. This new fund will serve as a necessary lifeline, helping Ostrow students (including those in occupational therapy and physical therapy) who are experiencing overwhelming financial challenges — challenges like paying their rent, providing for their young families, financing necessary emergency travel or affording basic necessities. I am happy to announce that we've already raised nearly \$15,000 in aid. I know not everyone is in a position to give, but if you are, consider making a gift to help support our students during these incredibly challenging times.

This week, we welcomed our new **ASPID Class of 2022** to Ostrow with what was the first-ever, all-digital orientation. It was so exciting to see so many new faces. Getting started in an online format could seem isolating. Interestingly enough, though, I've been incredibly heartened by stories I'm hearing about how, despite the distance, getting started on their educational journeys together in this time of crisis has actually helped this class forge stronger bonds than they might have otherwise. ASPID Class of 2022: I look forward to being able to meet you, face to face, and to officially welcome you into the Trojan Dental Family. Thank you, once again, to the faculty who are participating in these orientation activities and to our Admissions Team who worked so tirelessly to get this class' studies started.

When social distancing guidelines went into effect, nearly all research endeavors across the university had to necessarily grind to a halt. As we look ahead at restarting such a vital part of Trojan life, it is important to set up protocols for researchers to follow to be able to conduct scientific investigations safely and healthfully. To that end, Interim Vice President of Research Maja Mataric tasked each school to put together a back-to-work plan that comports with guidelines developed by the Centers for Disease Control, the City of Los Angeles and the University of Southern California. Our Associate Dean of Research **Yang Chai** convened a task force, composed of himself, **Jeff Chen**, **Pinghui Feng**, **Amy Merrill-Brugger**, **Parish Sedghizadeh**, **Mary Lawlor** (from OT) and **Carolee Winstein** (from PT). The task force put together a comprehensive plan to get our researchers back into their labs. Their plan was so comprehensive, in fact, that parts of it are being adopted by researchers at other USC schools. So, kudos to this group of researchers for doing such great work and making Ostrow look so good.

And lastly, I recently learned from our colleagues in the [USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy](#) that maintaining routine is one of the most important aspects during this time. A regular sleep schedule, physical activity, and healthy eating habits are the best foundation to positive

mental and physical health during this unprecedented time. And more importantly, personal hygiene and self-care are vital to ensuring your long-term health and well-being. I hope you are taking time each day to reflect, be mindful, and give-back to *yourself*.

Enjoy your weekend. Stay safe and healthy, and Fight On! Also, for our Muslim community members, Ramadan Mubarak.

Avishai

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Dean

G. Donald and Marian James Montgomery

Professor of Dentistry