

Dear Ostrow Community:

It is the completion of week two of our “safer at home” California effort to combat the spread of coronavirus. I understand there have been many dates given as to when we might physically return to USC; for now, we continue our mission of social distancing to slow the spread of the deadly pandemic. Once I hear differently, I will update you immediately.

Like many Angelenos, I’ve made it a point to stay home and manage my personal and professional life from the same space. It’s not always easy, but I empathize with and appreciate all of you who are making that effort. Donning a USC sweatshirt has become my family’s indicator of when I’m working and when I’m on personal time. The sweatshirt, one of my favorites, is helping me navigate the very gray space between work and life. When I can, and while observing the six-foot social distancing boundary, I’ve been taking daily walks. It’s given me time to pause, reflect and appreciate the simpler things in life.

During the past week, I have necessarily talked to some of you on a daily basis and to some of you a little less frequently. I am inspired, however, by the unconditional support that you all have shown in all facets of our operation, including education, research, and patient care. For example, your efforts have enabled us to continue delivering most educational materials without interruption and to build the infrastructure necessary to hold timely final exams for our students.

In addition, I’ve participated in a number of encouraging calls and video conferences. Most notably, the nation’s health-field deans are working together to activate our professional organizations to ensure they too are committed to state-wide, on-time graduation of the graduating class. I understand the anxiety and uncertainty faced by all of you, but I want to assure you that we’re all in this together. Our job is to bring the best out of our talented students, and I am confident we will be successful.

As you know, our Ostrow community is not confined to one profession, nor is it confined to one campus. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge our USC Chan Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy and the USC Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy. Both Grace Baranek and James Gordon have shown indefatigable leadership throughout this pandemic, regularly keeping their communities informed of perpetually evolving news and finding innovative solutions to ensure their students’ educations continue uninterrupted. Not for nothing, both divisions recently placed among the top programs in the *U.S. News & World Report*. Keep up the great work!

I also want to take a moment to recognize our faculty members, Drs. Rebecca Dayanim and Nam Cho. Together with their respective teams, they’ve been triaging dental emergencies in L.A. County Hospital. In addition, we have directed any extra PPE resources to those clinics throughout Southern California, including Keck, URM, JWCH, etc. to ensure our healthcare workers are safe and protected when providing the needed care at this time. Thank you all –

including vital staff and faculty members making this happen – for your dedication and support to this mission.

Lastly, I've been working with Dr. Alon Frydman, and a number of our faculty members to launch a limited-series of online continuing education courses. These courses — offered only to our alumni and faculty — will be delivered via Zoom during this “safer at home” period. To show our appreciation, the courses will be free to USC dentistry faculty. Please be on the lookout for more information in your inboxes shortly.

Thank you for being patient and supportive during this unprecedented time. We are all in this together, and new information is coming at us minute by minute. We are attempting to quickly navigate and troubleshoot. Continue to share your questions and comments, so we can refine our practices and best facilitate the needs of the many. I'm inspired by you all – our faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends of the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC.

Stay safe, stay healthy and Fight On!

Avishai

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