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Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC

[4/30/2021]



DEAN'S BI-WEEKLY MESSAGE

Dear USC Dentistry Community,

As you might have heard, the USC Office of the Provost has announced a few important updates in regards to our COVID-19 mitigation efforts. First, beginning May 3, students, faculty and staff who have been fully vaccinated (defined as: two weeks after your second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine or two weeks after your Johnson & Johnson vaccine) will no longer be

required to participate in weekly (or twice weekly for dental hygiene students) surveillance testing. You will, however, still be required to complete your Trojan Check every day to enter campus. If you have not yet been vaccinated or have submitted a personal declination to do so on your [MySHR](#), you will still be required to test regularly for campus access.

Secondly, all students, faculty and staff are required to have either uploaded your vaccination records or personal declinations to your MySHR by June 1. If you received your vaccines at a USC Student Health or Keck Medicine of USC site, your MySHR account should be updated automatically, but you might want to double check just to be sure.

Finally, once the U.S. Food and Drug Administration grants full approval for these vaccines (expected to happen later this summer), all USC students, faculty and staff will be required to be vaccinated to participate in any on-campus activity — unless you have requested an exception due to disability or religious belief. These are some crucial steps to ensure we are able to resume life as usual on our campuses for the Fall 2021 trimester/semester.





The **Ostrow Muslim Student Association (OMSA)** put together a special table in our East Lobby, celebrating the month of Ramadan — the most sacred month of the year in Islamic culture. During the month-long observance, which began this year on April 12, Muslims fast each day from sunrise to sunset and focus on spiritual reflection, self-improvement and a heightened sense of devotion and worship. Thank you to OMSA President **Abdulrahman Alkhatib DDS '23** for putting together the table and to **Farhan Hossain DDS '23**, **Noor Aamer DDS '23**, **Amirhossein Rahimdel DDS '23**, **Aida Dadashzadeh DDS '23** and **Crystal Barekzai DDS '23** for sharing a piece of your religion with us. To all who observe, Ramadan Mubarak!

Here, at Ostrow, we recently transitioned two of our faculty members into new positions, known as Infection Control Safety Specialists. These new roles are meant to ensure everyone in our community can enjoy a safe and healthy learning environment. One of the Infection Control Safety Specialist's responsibilities will be to ensure students, faculty and staff follow the school's safety and infection protocols and policies during audits throughout the dental school building. These new positions, which report to Chief Health Officer **Dr. Joyce Galligan**, will be filled by **Ms. Michaela Nguyen** and **Ms. Joyce Sumi**. Michaela and Joyce will generate reports and recommendations to identify safety and compliance matters for immediate correction or to discover educational opportunities to address non-compliance issues moving forward. Please join me in congratulating these two on their new roles!

The National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) recently released its list of the highest-funded U.S. dental institutions, and we were very excited to see that Ostrow is in the No. 4 slot — the highest we've ever been on this list! That the NIDCR has entrusted our tireless researchers with such funding is a true testament to the quality of the scientific investigation taking place on both campuses. It's even more impressive when you realize how hard our researchers have been working throughout the pandemic. [Read all about the research being supported by these federal funds](#). Please join me in congratulating **Associate Dean of Research Dr. Yang Chai** and all the faculty,

staff and students who are so wholeheartedly devoted to scientific discovery.

Last week, **Dr. Anita Tourah** was featured on the podcast, *Admissions Straight Talk*, a weekly show that tackles topics surrounding graduate school admissions. Anita did a terrific job, talking about what sets Ostrow apart from other dental schools, our admissions process and how our operations were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have a few extra minutes, the episode, titled ["An Inside Look at USC's Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry,"](#) is worth a listen. Thank you, Anita, for showcasing our program so well to prospective students.



This week, we welcome our **ASPID Class of 2023** to the Trojan Dental Family. This year's class is comprised of 50 percent women and 50 percent men, coming to us from 16 countries.

Last year, you'll remember, we were unable to hold our annual Faculty Appreciation Awards and Dinner due to the pandemic. This year, I am happy to

report that the event will return. Please save Wednesday, June 16, for the virtual event. A formal invitation will go out in the coming weeks. Thank you to the Office of External Relations, particularly **Ms. Danielle Barr**, **Mr. Bryce Merryman** and **Ms. Christie Van Paepeghem**, as well as Director of Faculty Affairs **Ms. Kelley Randle** for their work in putting this event together for us.

Finally, we will be holding our in-person Commencement for the Classes of 2020 and 2021 in the L.A. Coliseum on Friday, May 14 at 3:30 p.m. This year, this event is for students and a limited number of their guests only; unfortunately, faculty and staff members are not permitted to attend — due to ongoing pandemic restrictions. Students, if you have not yet registered, you can still do so by visiting commencement.usc.edu.

With that, I wish you all a nice weekend.

As always, stay safe, stay healthy and Fight On!

Avishai

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