

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

MICHIGAN COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY

15 March 2020

Dear MCO family:

In light of the current public health crisis brought on by the novel coronavirus and the resultant disease, it is incumbent upon all of us to take measures that minimize the spread of the virus and the risk to our students, staff, faculty, patients, and all our families. In the last two days, it has become abundantly clear that those considerations far outweigh considerations of continuing our students academic progress in the short term. That is why, across the nation and over the last 24 hours, academic healthcare institutions are suspending their students' activity in clinical experiences and shifting as much of their program to remote learning options as possible.

Therefore, after consultations with my colleagues in optometric education, the deans of the other healthcare programs here at Ferris State University, the executive administrators at the College, and the Provost, **I have decided to suspend all clinical experiential activities for our students for the next two weeks to protect the health and welfare of our students.** This includes second- and third-year assignments in the University Eye Center and fourth-year students at our externship sites. In addition, **the University Eye Center will suspend operations for that same period, with the exception of care for our patients with urgent or emergent conditions.** As we gather more information about how to contain the spread of this virus, and discuss future plans with the faculty, please watch for updates regarding when these suspensions will be lifted and how laboratory experiences will be continued remotely.

We do not yet have answers about how we will make up the time lost on clinical experiences. We have contacted the Accreditation Council for Optometric Education for guidance about these measures and how this may impact our students' completion of the requirements for graduation and our accreditation, and will take any actions we must after the crisis has passed to get all our students the credentials they need to have successfully completed the program. Please be patient as we work through these issues.

In the meantime, please exercise personal measures to keep you and your family members safe. Practice excellent hygiene, including washing your hands effectively and often. Stay out of any situation where there are large crowds or that put you within 3 feet of others you do not know (social distancing). You are all part of our MCO family, and we want you to remain safe so that you can care for the visual well-being of patients for years to come.

Please see the communications from the University's Office of the President for more on Ferris's response to this crisis. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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