



Office of the Provost

November 17, 2020

Dear Health Science Faculty and Students,

Now that we have more experience coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, I would like to again take this opportunity to tell you how proud we are of all our Health Science faculty and students who have persisted through the many challenges, uncertainties, and difficulties associated with this pandemic. I know it has not been easy and that it has required a great deal of flexibility, patience, and creativity. Throughout the pandemic, our number one priority has been to protect the health and safety of our student, faculty, staff, and community. This continues to be our major focus.

In August, we issued our “Guidance for University of Toledo Health Science Students in Clinical Rotations/Experiences/Internships during the COVID-19 Pandemic”. We have continued to learn more about COVID-19 and how it is spread and have now updated this clinical guidance, in line with updated CDC guidelines and with the approval of our infection control experts and Health Science deans. The updated guidance includes a requirement that all students must wear eye protection while providing care in clinical settings, along with the appropriate mask and any other required PPE.

Additionally, although in the past we have precluded health science students from caring for patients with known or suspected (Persons Under investigation—PUIs) COVID-19, we are changing this guidance and will now allow health science students to be assigned to care for PUIs or patients with known COVID-19 **with the caveat that appropriate PPE (includes fit-testing for N95 masks) must be available to the student, must be worn as directed, and they must follow all appropriate infection control protocols in the clinical facility in which they are learning.** This change in policy is due to several considerations: 1) we now know more about the transmission of this disease and ways that risk of transmission can be mitigated; 2) in some areas where large numbers of patients are classified as “PUIs”, (e.g., pediatrics), precluding our students from caring for these patients may place undue limitations on their clinical experiences; and 3) our health care students upon graduation will be entering a health care system in which COVID-19 remains prominent and thus will benefit from learning protective measures as students that will continue to protect them as later health care providers.

As noted previously, following this clinical guidance is not optional. The policies and safety measures we describe are absolutely necessary to safeguard everyone’s health and well-being, and we will be consistently enforcing these measures. Your Deans and Program Directors will be providing additional information specific to your program.

We recognize the importance of direct clinical experiences in your health education program, and we will make every effort to maintain our health science students in live clinical settings. However, as always, the health and safety of our students, faculty, staff, patients, and visitors will be our first and highest priority, guiding all our decision-making.

To our health science faculty, thank you for the passion, expertise, and caring that you continue to devote, especially in these unprecedented and difficult times, to the education of tomorrow's health care professionals. You play vital roles and your efforts are very much appreciated.

To our health science students, I wish you well as you continue toward your goal of becoming a health care professional, especially in these challenging times! You are very needed in the health care system and we know that you will have a significant positive impact on the health of our nation and the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen S. Bjorkman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Karen S. Bjorkman, PhD
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
Distinguished University Professor