



June 22, 2020

Dear Entering Class of 2020:

Welcome! We are delighted you will be joining us at the UW School of Medicine very soon! This letter is to talk with you about several things—the WWAMI program, the impact of Covid-19 on your education, and upcoming communications you will receive over the summer.

The WWAMI Program

The WWAMI model is unmatched in the nation. We are one medical school with six campuses across five states, incorporating the richness and diversity of six outstanding universities and colleges—which is value-added for your medical education. Our WWAMI partnership consists of: University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle, Gonzaga University in Spokane, University of Wyoming in Laramie, University of Alaska in Anchorage, Montana State University in Bozeman, and University of Idaho in Moscow.

All medical students on all campuses have the same learning objectives, resources, and examinations. Year after year, our analyses of student performance indicate no differences in student performance across campuses, and excellent performance overall. The deans, administrators and faculty based in the Academic, Rural and Regional Affairs Office in Seattle and the regional deans, administrators and faculty at our regional campuses partner closely to ensure maximum consistency in quality and resources across campuses. You will interact both with Seattle-based educators and educators on your regional campus—please reach out to any of them at any time.

Impact of Covid-19 on the Upcoming Year

Covid-19 has dramatically impacted how education is taking place nationally and globally. Many, if not most, medical schools will utilize at least partial distance learning in the fall. We are better prepared than most medical schools for a distance and hybrid world of education because we have used distance technology extensively in connecting our six campuses across five states for many years.

There are still many unknowns and as a result, things are constantly shifting. If there is a second spike in the number of Covid cases in the fall as is predicted, we want to be prepared with the best, most flexible model and maximize safety for our students. That means being adaptable. In all cases, we will optimize the balance between education and safety for our students.

Some things that have been determined for Autumn quarter starting August 2020:

Our current plan is to use a hybrid model. Some coursework will be virtual and some will be in-person. The mix of distance and in-person will vary in each regional campus because of variable Covid rates, risks, healthcare resources and different capacities for physical distancing in the five states.

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All students are expected to live in the community of their campus—at least some of your education will be in-person. You will hear directly from your Foundations dean (the dean on your campus who is in charge of the preclinical program at your campus) about specific plans for your campus for the model to be used:

- Immersion and orientation (you will also hear from the Immersion team based in Seattle)
- Courses, including anatomy
- Clinical teaching

Our current plan now at each campus is for anatomy education to be in-person because of student and faculty input that this material is more effectively learned hands-on. The nature of the anatomy lab experience may vary depending on Covid factors and capacity.

Teaching physical exam will also be in-person. Where teaching is in-person, there will be strict attention to student safety—through careful physical distancing and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Remote education does not mean isolated education. You will have a consistent small-group community of peers throughout the Foundations curriculum through the Colleges program—you will be paired with a faculty mentor and 4-6 peers with whom you will meet on a regular basis for both learning clinical skills and reflection on important topics. In addition, whether in-person or online, most courses have small group discussions as well as large-group sessions. This past spring, for example, our Energetics & Homeostasis course that was entirely online received excellent reviews. We are invested in ensuring that clinical education and some critical social topics are in person if at all possible.

For ceremonies like the White Coat Ceremony, the location (virtual versus in-person) will vary by regional campus, depending on class size, capacity for social distancing, and other factors. These ceremonies are important to all of us—we want them to be in-person if at all possible. However, if in-person is not an option, we will be creative and do our best to make them fun and celebratory online. We had a very successful and moving graduation ceremony online for our seniors this past May—see it at (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2smjPZAPmw>).

Enormous time, effort and thought are going into our preparations for Autumn in order to minimize any negative impact on your education. As in the past, providing you with a high-quality and satisfying educational experience remains our top priority.

We hope to return to fully in-person education in winter 2021.

Upcoming Communications

In July, you will receive a letter from Suzanne Allen, Vice Dean for Academic, Rural and Regional Affairs, with introductory information about the curriculum phases, financial aid, and student resources. You will also hear in July from Student Affairs about immersion/orientation, more about student services and other useful information.

In early August, you will receive information from Dr. Michael Ryan, Associate Dean for Curriculum, with information about policies and more detailed information about coursework.

You will receive other communications as well, including information from Foundations of Clinical Medicine (FCM) course faculty on immersion/orientation and what medical equipment you will need to purchase for your clinical training.

We also want to let you know that the common book selected for reading by all UW health professions schools is *How to Be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi. We encourage you to pick the book up and start reading it this summer. More information on the common book project is at: <https://hsl.uw.edu/uw-health-sciences-schools-announce-the-2020-2021-common-book-how-to-be-an-antiracist/>

Attached is a “who’s who” of people you can reach out to and their photos. Please don’t hesitate to contact any of us with questions/concerns/comments. And again, welcome—we can’t wait to have you join us!!

Sincerely,



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Vice Dean for Academic, Rural and Regional Affairs
University of Washington School of Medicine

On behalf of:

Michael Ryan, M.D., Associate Dean for Curriculum
Mark Whipple, M.D., Assistant Dean for Curriculum
Edith Wang, Ph.D., Assistant Dean for Basic Science
John McCarthy, M.D., Assistant Dean for Rural Programs
Raye Maestas, M.D., Associate Dean for Student Affairs
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