



August 21, 2021

Marcus Alfred, Ph.D.,
Chair, Howard University Faculty Senate
Washington, DC 20059

Dear Dr. Alfred,

I am in receipt of your communication dated August 20, 2021, and provide a response below. Regarding the suggestion that faculty be allowed to choose the instructional modality for instruction for the Fall, 2021 semester, to begin with, this is not permitted by the U.S. Department of Education which is monitored by the University's accrediting body, the Middle States Commission for Higher Education (MSCHE). Doing so would jeopardize the University's ability to operate, result in the loss of significant federal funding, as well as continue to negatively impact the visa status of international students. Some of the instructional modes used immediately following the onset of the pandemic from March 2020 through May, 2021, were permitted only secondary to a special waiver from the Department of Education MSCHE. During this period, Howard University, similar to other MSCHE institutions, was allowed to enroll students in the same section/course both in-person and online (remote synchronous), but that stipulation no longer exists. The waiver ended May 31, 2021.

Howard University, similar to other MSCHE accredited institutions, must address regulations in offering and reporting requirements, consistent with what MSCHE has previously approved for it, and be able to manage and monitor the percentage of a degree program that can be completed through distance methodologies. When the number of online courses exceed a certain amount, the University must request prior approval from the accrediting agency. Faculty who change a course mode can impact differently every student enrolled in their course. And for international students on campus, a student's visa status may be impacted if their schedule does not include a sufficient number of in-person credits.

Furthermore, it is key that Howard University meets the needs and expectations of students who have registered for face to face classes. In fact, we continue to increasingly receive requests for additional in-person instruction, as well as students who have disability accommodation requests necessitating in-person instruction. Our commitment to students and their families to a safe and robust educational experience, while adhering to compliance regulations -- is essential to continuing to build upon our world-class reputation that the faculty have been critical to developing.

We are in agreement that the paramount concern is for the health and safety of our faculty, students and staff, as well as the surrounding University community. As a Type I diabetic with Sickle

Cell Disease, I am potentially at the highest risk for COVID-19 infection, and have received the COVID-19 vaccination. I have continued to make teaching rounds, operate and see patients in the clinic. Provost Wutoh is also vaccinated, has also engaged students in the classroom this summer, and will be providing lectures to students face-to-face during the fall. We are not asking faculty to do something that we ourselves are not willing to do. I remain acutely updated and aware regarding the data, as well as what we must do to protect the University community. The data are clear, the most effective means to protect individuals, as well as the broader community, is to vaccinate as many people as possible. This is why we implemented a vaccine mandate, first for our students, and ultimately for faculty and staff as well. The CDC has recently announced the implementation of a vaccine booster shot to begin in September, 2021. I again will be among the first in line to receive the booster shot. There is 100% compliance to this requirement among University leadership.

A number of our colleagues are immunocompromised or are caring for loved ones that may potentially be at risk, this is why we provided for the opportunity for faculty and staff to request reasonable accommodations through the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) office at the University. To date, fifty (50) faculty and staff have requested accommodations, in the case of faculty, to teach online. A number have been approved, and several requests are awaiting additional information from the requestor. In order to have a fair and orderly process, we will continue to use this mechanism to receive, review and approve accommodation requests. As a reminder, the email address for faculty to use to request accommodations is eeo@howard.edu. Further instructions can be found on the HR website: <https://hr.howard.edu/eeo>. We would also welcome specific recommendations and suggestions regarding how to improve this process for faculty.

We have taken a number of steps to safeguard the community, and provide as safe an environment as possible, including the vaccine mandate. In regard to students, as of August 20, 2021, 4,881 students have moved into residential housing, 100% of those students provided documentation of full vaccination prior to move in. We have checked vaccination card submissions when there has been any suspicion of the legitimacy of a submission. This has only been rarely necessary, and would include contacting the site where vaccinations were administered to confirm. Any fraudulent submission is subject to disciplinary action. Overall, nearly 70% of students have submitted evidence of vaccination. Reminders are being distributed to non-residential students reminding them of this requirement. Students who do not provide evidence of full vaccination, or an approved exemption, will be de-registered from courses. The Office of the Deans are receiving a list of all students who have met the vaccine requirement as approved to be on campus.

In an effort to accommodate faculty and staff, the deadline for completion of the second dose of a two-dose regimen is by October 1, 2021. We could adjust to an earlier deadline if that is the suggestion of the Faculty Senate. New hires are already required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to their start date. Masks are still required indoors and outdoors while on campus regardless of vaccination status. Medical and religious exemptions will be granted in accordance with federal and local law. We continue to have the most robust testing requirement of District academic institutions, with

requirement for weekly testing, this will be the case for vaccinated, as well as exempt individuals. Additionally, greater functionality is being incorporated into the BisonSafe app to account for vaccine status. Individuals who have not been vaccinated, or have an approved exemption, will not have a visual clearance indicator from the app to be on campus. Faculty can require students to visually provide the display denoting approval to be in a classroom. We will continue to make adjustments in classroom assignments to accommodate spacing, and appropriate distancing, particularly as we clarify room availability based upon the status of various renovations.

The full fall guidance is provided as an attachment. Please note that this Fall, 2021 plan is intended to be a dynamic document. We will continue to update and revise the plan, in accordance with changes in guidance from the CDC and District of Columbia, and the latest available health data. The guidance reflects not only the most recent recommendations and guidance from the CDC, District of Columbia, and public health leadership, but also the 13 reopening subcommittees first convened in Summer, 2020, composed of faculty, students, staff and community partners. Additionally, we continue to liaise with partner institutions in the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan area regarding their planning and data.

I want to acknowledge and express deep appreciation to the faculty in our health professional programs (College of Dentistry, College of Medicine, College of Pharmacy, College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences, and Faculty Practice Plan) who have worked diligently and sacrificially throughout this pandemic to keep us safe; establishing a testing protocol, implementing a vaccine clinic, and continuing to provide clinical care of the highest quality. We will continue to have confidence in the recommendations and guidance of our public health leadership to keep us safe. We understand the concern that faculty may have in returning to campus if they have been working remotely for nearly 18 months, we are also sensitive to the anxiety and apprehension related to COVID-19 and the disparate impact that it has had on the African American community, and other communities of color. We will certainly consider and implement all reasonable measures to safeguard our faculty and community. I am however disappointed that as the Chair of the Faculty Senate, you have chosen not to engage University leadership when asked to weigh in regarding critical issues related to reopening during the summer. A communication provided to me two days before the start of classes to restructure course modality is not indicative of an effort towards shared governance, and is counter to the best interests of the faculty and the University as a whole.

Excellence in Truth & Service,



Wayne A. I. Frederick, MD, MBA
President