March 27, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Highlights of today's communication:

- WSU system COVID-19 forum
- Protection of health information
- Research guidance
- Commencement update
- Recent communications to students
- Levity via Spokane-specific Zoom backgrounds

As another week comes to a close amidst our new reality in the face of COVID-19, I want to wrap up these past five days with some hope, and even some levity.

This morning at 11 am PDT, the WSU system will host an online COVID-19 forum on YouTube, which is your opportunity to hear important updates and get answers to your questions.

In regard to our COVID-19 case notification process, in subsequent COVID-19 updates we reiterated our steps, should faculty or staff hear of a suspect or confirmed case. These scenarios are specific to an individual, of their own accord, self-reporting a case, or if faculty or staff receive a report from local public health.

I want to stress that there is no expectation that students, staff or faculty self-report their suspect or confirmed cases. This is protected health information and, legally, the determination to share this information lies solely with the individual. Additionally, public health
agencies like Spokane Regional Health District, have the legal authority to disclose this information to us if it is critical to their investigation and notification. I am proud of our campus community and its commitment to protecting individual's sensitive health information and the many instances I've witnessed of our adherence to privacy laws. Keep up the good work!

On March 26, WSU Interim Provost and Executive Vice President, Bryan Slinker, and Vice President for Research, Chris Keane, issued important research guidance that many of you may find helpful as our campus continues taking steps to limit on-campus research activities based on public health considerations.

Specific to commencement, on March 25, WSU President, Kirk Schulz issued an update to students regarding a system-wide decision to hold a virtual commencement May 9 and postpone Pullman's in-person ceremony to August 2020. We are working closely with the WSU system to learn more about these plans and how our campus will participate. We will continue to provide updates accordingly.

In the meantime, I want to applaud our Student Affairs leadership and staff for their continual updates to students. On March 26, they launched COVID-19 specific web pages (Spokane and Yakima) that include helpful information on access to services and equipment, including critical Campus Pantry access details, as well as an important student survey that will help us better understand how we can help improve student access and connectivity specific to online learning. Please help in sharing these vital resources with students.

Finally, some much needed levity as the campus Communications team released several dozen Spokane campus-specific images to download and use in your Zoom or other virtual backgrounds. Many of these put a much-needed smile on my face and I hope they do the same for you.

In closing, I'll borrow from the signature of WSU Spokane Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Jim Mohr, and encourage you all to 'Keep Calm and Cougar On'.

Sincerely,

Daryll DeWald
Vice President and Chancellor
WSU Health Sciences Spokane