



Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Communication to PHSU Community from the Chancellor's Office

Dear PHSU Community:

We trust you are all safe, healthy and in good spirits!

A year has passed since the beginning of the global COVID-19 pandemic which has significantly impacted all aspects of our lives and has changed the way we live our day to day lives. Despite the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, our institution as a whole adapted to meet and exceed our significant goals and objectives under our triple-mission: academics, research, and service. Along these lines, we were able to promote the growth of our research enterprise, continued providing a competitive academic environment to nurture student's educational training and development, allowed students our different academic programs to graduate and move on to the next level of their professional career, and we were able to sustain efforts un fulfilling the needs of our community during these very challenging times. All this could have never been achieved without the hard work and unconditional commitment from the entire PHSU community including, staff, faculty, students, and administration. On behalf of the entire administration, we appreciate everything each of you have done on behalf of the institution throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and other adversity we as a community faced in 2020.

As you are fully aware, due to safety concerns during these times many of our day-to-day activities, including our didactic offerings, were delivered using remote platforms, and face-to-face activities were limited to selective activities, including laboratory and standardized patients' exercises and research activities. All of these exercises were conducted following strict safety guidelines.

In an effort to keep you aware of how campus is operating throughout the pandemic, we have been operating on a limited basis and have implemented new safety procedures on campus. Research faculty and staff have been working on campus since May 2020. Shortly after, we incorporated the personnel from most administrative units, including Finance, Human Resources, General Services, the President's Office, the Chancellor's Office, Student Affair Services, and others.

Due to our strict safety measures, we are proud to state that no COVID-19 cases have been reported on campus. Furthermore, we the availability of effective vaccines against COVID-19, we count with an additional tool to face the pandemic. Along these lines, according to the current rate of vaccination, it is expected that the entire community of PHSU will be vaccinated before the 2021 summer session.

As time has gone by and we have gained further knowledge on the nature of the pandemic and have been able to responsibly assimilate to bringing people back to campus slowly. We have been able to increase the presential activities on and off-campus, including nursing courses on East campus, faculty meetings, administrative activities from the Chancellor's office, the MD Program Match Day, and the MD White Coat Ceremonies. All these activities were well-coordinated and were held without any incidents. Moreover, the Nursing Capping Ceremonies (April 25, 2021) and the 2021 Commencement Ceremonies (Saturday, June 5, 2021) will also be conducted in person.

Moving forward in efforts to reestablish normalcy in our day-to-day operations at PHSU, we have decided to proceed as follows:

- (1) **Presential Classes will resume on campus next fall semester 2021.** To accomplish this process safely, we will be working with specific safety protocols in collaboration with all Deans, Unit Directors, Human Resources, and the PHSU COVID 19 Task Force. The intention is to return to campus in a safe and orderly manner while taking all the necessary steps to ensure everyone's safety.
- (2) **Faculty and Staff from all programs shall return to campus for presential work beginning Monday, April 5, 2021.** Faculty and Staff, and other employees are needed to proceed with the necessary arrangements to prepare the campus for presential classes next fall semester (August 2021). Additional instructions will be given by the respective Academic Deans and Unit Directors. Employees confronting issues/concerns with this institutional decision must discuss available options with the immediate supervisor and the Department of Human Resources. The administration has taken effective steps to enhance the safe environment on campus. Thus, detailed safety protocols have been reviewed and implemented by the PHSU Covid 19 Task Force; cleaning companies have received specific instructions of providing constant disinfection of all areas on campus, and COVID-19 filters have been installed in all air conditioning units on campus, etc.
- (3) **Restrictions in Travel Policy will be maintained until further notice.**

We look forward to having you all back on campus in upcoming months.

Cordially,



Jose A. Torres-Ruiz, Ph.D.
Chancellor
Ponce Health Sciences University