

The beginning of the end, and our greatest challenge

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on behalf of

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To: alvsce_bulletin@list.cals.arizona.edu <alvsce_bulletin@list.cals.arizona.edu>

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Dear Colleagues,

I hope you all had a chance over the last few weeks to reconnect with the people who are important to you. I explored some parts of Arizona I'd been to with work but had never had time to *see*: flights of sandhill cranes returning at dusk in the Willcox Playa, Fort Huachuca's Buffalo Soldier and Intelligence museums, and the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. We live in a beautiful and exceptionally diverse state.

I was true to my word, and I took a true break from my pc for the first time in more than a decade--I hope you did, too.

Just over a year ago, I wrote to you that I thought we'd reached the end of the beginning of the *acute-COVID-19* pandemic. For biological reasons, especially including the Omicron variant, I think we are now in the beginning of the end of the *acute-COVID-19 pandemic*. However, this is not going to be an easy beginning. It will extract another cost from each of us.

In the next three weeks I believe we are facing realities and challenges in Arizona at least equal, but also different, to those we have yet experienced. This isn't good news. Now, in the most complex circumstances we have faced since this pandemic began - when we are burned out, fed up, frustrated, irritated - we must work out what our individual and *collective* actions will be for our least-worst outcome, *together*.

If you haven't already, you will very soon commonly hear of symptomatic "vaccine breakthrough" *infections* in people you know well (I personally know of many), or experience one yourself (I haven't yet). Asymptomatic infections will be even more common. This does NOT mean vaccinal immunity is not mitigating *disease*; the vaccines are protecting you, and those you love, against severe *disease* and death. The vaccines are safe in pregnancy, and they do enable protective immunity to transfer to high-risk newborns.

In contrast, the unvaccinated are practically at as serious a risk of disease as ever. The Omicron variant may be a bit "milder" but, especially in unvaccinated people, it's still a killer.

Yes, we now have medications that can mitigate the disease progression in some people, but they are not panaceas and availability is a challenge. I understand and respect that vaccination is absolutely not an option for some people; I believe that only you should decide what goes into your body (or that of your legal dependent). But if you are not vaccinated, and even if you have the undeniably real and functional natural immunity from past infection, if you are in anyway whatsoever able to see your way clear to being vaccinated, please do.

If you live in the Tucson area, Pima County and the university will provide Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines to students, faculty, staff, and DCCs at a walk-in vaccination clinic (no appointment needed) at the **Cole and Jeannie Davis Sports Center**, 640 N. National Championship Drive on **Wednesday, January 12, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

Almost certainly, many more people will experience post-COVID conditions (aka "long COVID", "long-haul COVID", "post-acute COVID-19", "long-term effects of COVID", "chronic COVID") that can be debilitating. If you have post-COVID conditions that are affecting your ability to work, please seek advice from the Disability Resource Center.

We've all been through the same pandemic years, yet we have had different pandemic experiences. This effect will be intensified in the next three weeks or so. I haven't seen anyone at their best. Not UA employees, not students, not stakeholders and, yes, not even administrators. *So, I ask you to please give everyone even more grace than ever as they face their unique challenges, in their unique situation.*

Finally, and formally, I request the following of all my direct reports and every supervisor in our statewide enterprise:

1. Please work with employees individually as needed, using your common sense, experience and understanding, your demonstrated compassion and creativity, to accommodate their very real pandemic issues as best you possibly can.
2. Sometimes with only minutes' notice, an employee's children will need to stay home from school or daycare (mine is currently) or instructors will need to quarantine or isolate themselves. Please make the best adjustments you can. The best you can do is the best that can be done.
3. Please maximize the chances of keeping the university operating *and keeping people safe* by decreasing the virus load inside buildings by having the fewest possible employees on campus or in buildings statewide. Allow people to work from home, outside, and in the lowest density whenever possible.
4. Post-COVID conditions are real. Please support employees with post-COVID conditions as you would with acute COVID-19 disease.

We do have the tools, and there is always one more thing we can do to make our situation better. I know this because I have seen us do it. Over and over.

Thank you everyone for everything you have done and all that I know you will do for each other.

Shane

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We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.