



Paving the Way for a Post-COVID World

BY MICHAEL F. SMITH

EACH YEAR, as a society, we reflect on the past and look to the year to come. Some of us make resolutions. A lot of us say, “This is going to be the best year yet.”

None of us predicted what was in store for 2020. COVID-19 has rocked the globe. For almost three months, the world shut down. People lost loved ones, many without being able to say goodbye. Communities were asked to stay in isolation. Businesses were forced to close.

As we reopen with an eye on the future, the College of Health Sciences at the University of Delaware (UDCHS) is at the forefront of a post-COVID-19 world. Training health care professionals will be more important than ever.

We need to encourage a new generation of health care heroes to dedicate their lives to the health and wellness of others. So, what are we doing at the University of Delaware to prepare this next generation workforce and where do they fit into this changing health care dynamic?

Remember the models that predicted the impact of COVID-19 and helped drive decisions nationally and on the state level? Epidemiologists help create these models by investigating health patterns and using

research, community education and health policy to help reduce the risk and occurrence of negative health outcomes.

The founding director of UD’s epidemiology program, Dr. Jennifer Horney, has been on the front lines helping the state of Delaware navigate its path forward. UD’s Master of Public Health (MPH) in Epidemiology offers the training needed for the next generation of epidemiologists to deal with future infectious diseases and natural disasters. They will prepare and ready our response to these earth-shattering problems.

The word ‘testing’ has become one of the most searched terms during this pandemic. What kind of testing? What does it entail? What do you need to do to get it done? Where do you go? How long does it take? These are all questions asked to better understand the process.

Most people don’t stop to think WHO does the testing. The Department of Medical and Molecular Sciences at UDCHS is training the technicians and scientists who administer these tests and work in the labs to process the results. If their jobs weren’t critical enough, there is a national shortage of medical laboratory scientists that is only expected to get worse in the coming years. That’s even more reason for our next

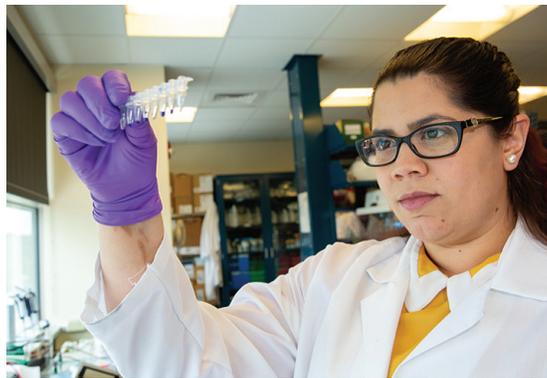
generation of medical and molecular scientists to be ready to hit the front lines!

Remember when sitting in a waiting room was a normal occurrence? Waiting rooms could be a thing of the past. For care, telemedicine is becoming a thing of the present. UD Health and its clinics have adapted during these changing times to deliver speech pathology services, physical therapy services and primary care services to community members throughout the state of Delaware.

Have symptoms that cause you concern? Meet over a telehealth visit with Carolyn Haines, director of our Nurse Managed Primary Care Center. Get your prescription ordered and work with our care coordinator to navigate any other steps in the healthcare process until you are well.

You never had to get in your car. You skipped the waiting room. Telehealth services are just one way that UDCHS is working to address the health disparities existing in our communities. It is part of a larger, interprofessional model for delivering health care – one that looks much like the University of Delaware STAR Campus.

As our clinic staff works, they are also training the next generation of nurses, physical therapists and speech pathologists. Your visit actually helps



train these future health care professionals to expand their health care delivery methods and learn how to give their patients options no matter the circumstances.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve. As that evolution continues, it's more important than ever to have a new generation of children aspire to become health care professionals filled with empathy for our loves and a heart for service.

When they make that decision, I hope they'll consider the University of Delaware College of Health Sciences. From the STAR

Campus to the health sciences program offerings and experiential learning opportunities, it's hard to find another environment that will prepare you to be ready for the next pandemic or health crisis.

At UD, you'll not only be well trained, you'll be ready to lead and make



us better prepared in the process to help society navigate the unknown. ■

Representative Michael Smith is the director of strategic initiatives at the University of Delaware's College of Health Sciences.



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