Opening Remarks: In anticipation of the markedly increasing vaccine availability and researchers hoping/expecting more relaxed policies with respect to onsite research activities, Dr. Kaplan stated that the University will be adhering to the present guidelines and will continue to model any future changes based on CDC recommendations. Once we have additional information from the CDC and after more of the population has been vaccinated, information regarding any changes to the current guidelines will be developed and announced. For now, we will continue with the current guidelines. Dr. Kaplan also noted that if infection rates remain low and the variants don’t skyrocket, we will be hosting the LFC and DePaul summer undergraduate programs. All program participants will be required to be fully vaccinated and allow two weeks following their last vaccination dose, before joining the labs.

Q: Where do things stand with new dry ice makers?

A: They have been ordered and are expected to be received around the end of March. Next step will be the confirmation of placement with EHS within the IRP and the expansion labs.

Q: Any updates on the repairs for the autoclaves?

A: Dr. Kaplan and Bob Jackson have met with Ed Button (Amity). All autoclaves have been assessed, parts ordered and will be repaired as soon as the parts arrive. That said, Dr. Kaplan has asked that everyone share in the responsibility of shutting down the autoclaves after use or at day’s end. This will ensure the well-being and prevent premature aging of autoclave parts. Currently in the IRP there are 4 working autoclaves (1 on floors 1&2; and 2 on the 4th floor).

Q: Will the barriers in the North parking lot be removed any time soon?

A: With March’s arrival and the hope that any remaining snowfall is minimal, the barriers will be removed in the next few weeks.

Q: With the vaccinations being given, when can the common areas expect to see Microwaves and Refrigerators available for use?

A: We are still being cautious with the common areas. Dr. Kaplan appreciates your patience but insists all must err on the side of caution. We can re-address this topic in a couple of months when vaccination numbers are substantially higher and hopefully infection positivity rates remain low.

Q: Has the University Leadership made any decisions on mandating the vaccine for University employees?

A: Leadership has not made the blanket statement as of date, however, each program has their own guidelines and best to check with that program. Dr. Kaplan encouraged the vaccine and stated that studies of the vaccines to date indicate them to be highly efficacious and beneficial to your health and safety!

Q: Once an employee is vaccinated, will they still be required to do bi-weekly testing?
A: Until the CDC provides any guidance on this general issue, and RFU leadership subsequently meets to make a decision on this issue, we will continue the bi-weekly testing process. Leadership will base all decisions on recommendations of the CDC.

Comments: Dr. Oblinger announced that IACUC had inspected laboratories and the BRF and everything was in perfect shape with no issues. Also, the request to update forms for personnel who work with animals or are potentially exposed to areas where animal studies take place, is nearly complete.

Dr. Kaplan stated that the Research Integrity Training is at approximately 99% completion.

The next scheduled session is April 7, 2021. However, if you have something that comes up before then, please reach out to Dr. Kaplan’s office directly.