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### 2020-07-01 A Message from Chancellor Roth

Paul B. Roth

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## A Message from Chancellor Roth

Dear Colleagues:

Yesterday, Dr. Anthony Fauci told a U.S. Senate panel that the number of new COVID-19 infections could double to 100,000 per day. This dire and ominous prediction came amid a major surge in new cases throughout the country.

Here in New Mexico, we made substantial progress in lowering the rate at which the coronavirus is transmitted from one person to another, so that by mid-June it was well below 1.0 – which if sustained over time would mean the virus would eventually stop spreading.

But last week, we reversed course and saw the transmission rate climb to 1.21, where it sits today (this rate predicts 100 infected people would spread the disease to 121 others). It was a sign that New Mexicans were not taking as many precautions as before while many businesses and public spaces reopen, and it was the reason Gov. Michele Lujan Grisham hit the “pause” button on further loosening restrictions.

The transmission rate is one of the “gating criteria” public health officials use to decide when and whether to relax COVID-related restrictions. They have set a target of getting the transmission rate below 1.05 as one of the threshold conditions for further opening up the state.

This, together with recent research suggesting that asymptomatic transmission of the coronavirus is more prevalent than previously believed, underscores the need to maintain – and even strengthen – the precautions we are taking to limit the spread of the disease.

As always, these include limiting travel, maintaining physical distance, wearing a mask in public and thorough hand-washing. Adhering to these measures will save lives and prevent our

hospitals and health care workers from being overwhelmed. Not complying with wearing masks and physical distancing is not only risky for you but highly risky for vulnerable groups who subsequently become exposed to an only minimally ill COVID-positive patient. This is why people who are younger and healthy have a civic duty to behave in a responsible manner and continue to follow public health guidance.

Meanwhile, as President Stokes said in her message on Monday, University leaders continue to closely monitor local, state and federal health guidance as plans are made to resume classes for the Fall semester, to ensure the safety of our students, faculty and staff.

And finally, I'd like to thank all of the students, staff and faculty who stepped forward to volunteer in countless ways during the first few months of the pandemic. Your contributions made a real difference and reflect the ethos of service here at the Health Sciences Center.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul B. Roth". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Paul B. Roth, MD, MS  
Chancellor for Health Sciences