



For Immediate Release
March 24, 2020

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Salus President: Pay Attention to Social Distancing, Shelter in Place Protocols

Elkins Park, Pa. — I walked around our campus this morning, I was struck and saddened by the total silence and emptiness of the spaces that are usually buzzing with activity from our extremely talented and bright students, faculty and staff. I am angered that we find ourselves in a situation where we have to close our doors in order to fight a silent enemy, but even more frustrated that some in our communities have not taken this fight seriously enough to follow the modern rules of engagement — social distancing.

I am the president of Salus University in Elkins Park, Pa. We are a small, but diverse private health science education university housing the country's oldest and one of the best colleges of optometry, as well as world-class programs in audiology, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, physician assistant studies, and blindness and low vision studies. I am writing this op-ed not to market our programs but to

express my extreme anger, frustration and hope over the current COVID-19 pandemic.

I must admit, I am more than a casual observer in all this. I spent more than 33 years in the Navy providing patient care, and later in my career led our medical efforts in support of Operation Tomodachi, the 2011 Japanese earthquake and tsunami resulting in thousands of deaths that also thrust Japan into a full-blown nuclear emergency. I understand the importance of getting large groups of people to shelter in place, quarantine when necessary and do what's best for the entire community. When faced with a nuclear disaster, we had no problem getting people to do just those things.

Now, faced with another threat to our health, I am frankly confounded by the many people in our local communities and the country who do not understand the seriousness of this situation. Seeing large groups of people congregate in parks, on beaches and in the water defies logic and speaks to a total disregard for the safety of others by those not practicing social distancing and sheltering in place.

If we're going to get a handle on all this and succeed in what public health experts call, "flattening the curve," everyone, and I do mean everyone, needs to assume that they are infected and that the goal is to prevent the spread of the disease to others. If you don't do this, some people — maybe even your own loved ones — can die. If you do practice this, then you're doing the very best you can to help stop the spread.

We have the world's best researchers and research infrastructure. Our academic and federal medical institutions are aligned and are working overtime on potential treatment options and eventually we'll have a vaccine. Today, our dedicated medical teams are working overtime to save lives and make a difference. As Americans, we have always been able to come together in a crisis, and this time will be no different. So please, everyone come together and do three simple things that will help

bring us all back to some degree of normalcy: **Practice Social Distancing, Wash Your Hands and Stay at Home.**

Michael H. Mittelman, OD, MPH, MBA
President, Salus University

About Salus University

Salus University, founded as the Pennsylvania College of Optometry in 1919, today is a diversified, globally recognized professional academic center of learning that offers a wide range of degree programs in the professions of Optometry, Audiology, Physician Assistant, Public Health, Blindness and Low Vision Studies, Biomedicine, Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Pathology. Salus operates four clinical facilities in Philadelphia and Montgomery counties that provide highly specialized vision, hearing and balance, and speech-language pathology services. The University has more than 1,200 students, and more than 14,000 alumni worldwide. For more information, please visit www.salus.edu.