



Montefiore

*From the* OFFICE OF THE DEAN



## Dear Einstein Community:

With Labor Day fast approaching and the beginning of a new academic year, I want to highlight a number of recent activities that underscore Einstein's many strengths, both in terms of who we are as an institution and how we care for our people. I'll start with the caring part.

### Health Safety at Einstein & Other Positive News

Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, senior leadership has emphasized the importance of keeping people safe on campus. It's a testament to the outstanding efforts of *everyone*—students, faculty, staff, and postdocs—that during the past month we have had no new cases of COVID-19 transmissions reported on campus. And this despite the fact that we've had over 1,000 students arriving at Einstein for the fall term and increasing numbers of staff and faculty members coming to work.

In particular, it speaks to the dedication of our students and postdocs, who have followed the necessary protocols to keep our research going, despite the pandemic. It's also important to give a shoutout to our staff in housekeeping and environmental health and safety, who have cleaned and disinfected our campus around the clock. We must, as always, remain diligent to maintain these efforts, which have yielded such positive results.

On a related point, this year's flu vaccine soon will be available on campus and I encourage all of you to take advantage of this opportunity to get vaccinated. It's an effective way to safeguard your health and prevent the spread of disease—and an important step to ensuring our hospitals will not be overwhelmed, should we experience an uptick in COVID-19 cases during the traditional flu season. Information on timing and how to schedule your flu shot will be sent out by our occupational health service team. The more protected we are individually, the

better off we *all* will be.

The care and concern we have for one another is reflected in a recent *Forbes* magazine survey, which for the second year running, has named Einstein in its listings of “Best in State” Employers. We are listed in the top 100 (#65, actually) for all employers (of all sizes) in New York, which is a reflection—again—of everyone’s outstanding efforts, including those who work under Yvonne Ramirez’s direction in human resources.

### **Research News**

In terms of other news, Einstein has continued to flourish as a research institution. For example, we have had a number of non-COVID-19 papers published recently, including Uli Steidl’s paper in [Nature](#), which reports on how random gene expression is critical for stem cell function. Also, a pair of papers by Michael Lipton provide nuance to his previous research on how frequent ball heading impacts brain function among amateur soccer players.

In grant news, Lucas Sjulson, assistant professor of psychiatry & behavioral sciences and of neuroscience, has received a prestigious NIH Director’s Pioneer Award, given to those who have the potential to make extraordinary contributions to medical research. His five-year, \$2.5 million grant will support research on the neuronal transcriptomic and functional profiles in opioid addiction

Based on the strength and importance of our research, we continue to generate substantial media coverage, and I encourage you to visit our [Newsroom](#) and dedicated [Einstein in the News](#) webpage. In doing so, I call your attention to coverage of Liise-anne Pirofski, who has commented on the recent FDA decision to issue an emergency use authorization for convalescent serum to treat patients with COVID-19. Given her leadership in this area, she has been frequently called upon to provide her informed and thoughtful perspective in a number of articles. Also of note, Kartik Chandran was highlighted in [Science News](#) in an article about the man in Hong Kong who is the first confirmed case of coronavirus reinfection.

### **Concerning Current Events and Gun Violence**

On a matter of grave concern, once again we’ve been reminded of the systemic

racism that exists in our nation with yet another shooting of an unarmed black man—Jacob Blake in Wisconsin—by a police officer. Disturbingly, the right to peacefully protest these shootings and other manifestations of racism is being called into question by some at the highest levels of our government, emboldening certain individuals to arm themselves in an attempt to take the law into their own hands. In Kenosha, WI, this created an incendiary situation that resulted in the death of two people and injured a third.

The issue of gun violence in our own city and around the country is one that we as healthcare providers seek to frame and address as a public health issue. In 2020, there already have been 1,000 deaths in New York City from gun violence. Our clinical faculty and students see the direct results of this violence while caring for the wounded and their families, yet again disproportionately affecting people of color in our community. It is important to recognize gun violence as a health disparity and an issue we need to confront as we pursue health equity.

### **Getting Help on Campus**

As demonstrations for social justice—and counter-demonstrations—continue across the country, Einstein stands with and supports our community members of color, as well as others, in confronting the social injustices and inequities that persist, and in striving to overturn systemic racism. All of this has taken a psychological toll on many of us and I want to remind members of the Einstein community that we offer resources that can help. For example:

- We have services to support individuals who are feeling stressed by current events or have other concerns, including:
  - our [Wellmed program](#) for students;
  - our [Student Mental Health Center](#) (available to all students and postdocs);
  - Carebridge (our [employee assistance program](#); [register here](#)); and
  - our psychiatry and behavioral sciences department's [Virtual Support Center](#).
- Our security team also works hard to keep our campus community safe and [offers helpful tips](#) for living in the city.

### **And Finally...**

At this time in our country's history, it's important that we be counted—

through [completion of our 2020 Census forms](#) and by [voting in the November 3 election](#). Anyone—citizen or not—residing in the United States as of April 1, 2020 should complete the census, which determines federal funding that we receive at Einstein and Montefiore, along with funding received by states and municipalities.

If eligible to vote, [be sure you are registered](#) and take the time to do so on November 3 (or during early voting, which runs from October 24 to November 1, in New York), as it represents one of our greatest rights and privileges as American citizens. It's also a great way to honor the 100th anniversary of the passing of the 19th amendment, granting women the right to vote, as well as the memory of Congressman John Lewis, who fought so hard for voting rights for all.

This anniversary and the election itself offer an opportunity to take positive action that is so desperately needed at this crucial time in our nation's history. Make sure your voice is heard. Despite all the obvious challenges we face, I feel confident that we will persevere and, ultimately, succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Tomaselli', with a stylized, flowing script.

**Gordon F. Tomaselli, M.D.**

**The Marilyn and Stanley M. Katz Dean**

*Albert Einstein College of Medicine*

**Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer**

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