February, 2016

TO: ALL NEW STUDENTS

Congratulations on your admission to a Postdoctoral Program at the College of Dental Medicine.

You can find our Handbook and all the forms and links you’ll need to complete your financial aid application on our website, www.cumc.columbia.edu/student/finaid. After reviewing the information, please complete the Aid Type Request Form and return it directly to our office as soon as possible.

To apply for the Federal Direct Loan and Grad Plus loan programs, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The deadline for filing the FAFSA is March 21st, or within two weeks after your offer of admission, whichever is later. Please select the option to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool when asked. If you and your spouse (if applicable) have not completed 2015 federal income tax returns by the time you prepare the FAFSA, you may use estimates. However, should any FAFSA entry differ by more than $500 after the tax returns have been completed, or should you have a change in circumstances, you are obligated to notify us in writing. Be sure to reference the line items in the FAFSA when writing us. Please be sure that Your Name, PG appears on materials you submit directly to our office.

Should any of your personal information change after you submit the application materials, or if you have questions or concerns about the application process, please email your financial aid officer, Tony Glad, at arg2212@cumc.columbia.edu.

Please pay special attention to the June 1st deadline for the “Interschool Scholarships” listed on our website. If you believe you are eligible for any of these scholarships, email us as soon as possible, explaining how you qualify.

All of the loans we may recommend as part of your financial aid package are unsubsidized and begin to accrue interest on the loan from each disbursement. Payments can usually be postponed until sometime during or after post-graduate training.

The Federal Direct Graduate PLUS and private alternative loans that we may recommend as part of your financial aid package use creditworthiness as a criteria for loan approval. If you are not sure how "clean" your credit rating is, I would suggest that prior to matriculation you secure a copy of your credit report from at least one of the three main credit bureaus. On our website you will find a link to www.annualcreditreport.com, where you can request free copies of your credit reports from the three major credit bureaus.

You should become an educated consumer and take the initiative to learn all that you can about your options, given your personal financial situation. Please realize that the responsibility is primarily yours when it comes to finances. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need further information or have any questions.
International students may face special challenges in financing their education. There are no federally guaranteed assistance programs, and most private educational loans cannot be obtained without a creditworthy US co-signer. Some lenders will also consider a US permanent resident. At a minimum, the co-signer should have at least a two-year employment history, good credit, and the ability to repay the loan in case of default on the part of the student. For more detailed information regarding private educational loan programs, please visit the University's Student Financial Services Web site. Please be aware that you have the right and ability to select the education loan provider of your choice, are not required to use any suggested lenders and will suffer no penalty for choosing a lender that is not a suggested lender.

To ensure that you will have the necessary financing for school, it is essential that you begin the process of securing a co-signer and applying for the loans you will need as soon as possible. You should submit applications for private loans as soon as they are available for the academic year so that you can find out whether your co-signer meets the credit criteria of the lender you choose. Once you and your co-signer have applied for a loan, the lender will inform you if the loan is approved or denied.

For the purposes of visa documentation, you should note that loans are accepted as documentation of financial resources only if they have been approved for credit by the lender and certified by our Office. You will work with International Affairs Office (IAO) to obtain your visa. You will need to complete the IAO Application for Visa Certificate.

Check with private loan lenders to see if you are required to have a US Social Security Number (SSN) or if it’s required only for the co-signer at the time of application. For some loan programs, applicants may need to begin the SSN application process before the start of the academic year. International students should note that you cannot obtain a US Social Security Number unless they are currently living in the United States. The International Affairs Office (IAO) on the CUMC campus can let you know the procedures in applying for a Social Security Number. You may be able to apply for an individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN), which lenders may accept in lieu of an SSN.

We appreciate the importance of financial aid in planning your education. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need further information.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Ellen Spilker
Executive Director