



**XAVIER**  
UNIVERSITY of LOUISIANA



**DILLARD**  
UNIVERSITY

Dear students, staff, and faculty of Dillard and Xavier Universities,

Our communities have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, with harrowing consequences for the lives and health of our fellow citizens. Overcoming the virus will require the availability of vaccines effective for all peoples in our communities, especially our black and brown neighbors. Phase 3 vaccine trials have begun across the nation, including in New Orleans. It is of the utmost importance that a significant number of black and brown subjects participate so that the effectiveness of these vaccines be understood across the many diverse populations that comprise these United States.

We, the Presidents of Dillard and Xavier, are already participating in the Ochsner Medical System's [current vaccine trial](#). As part of the study, we have received our injections and have been monitoring and reporting any symptoms and side effects. Upon our enrollment, we were fully informed, and any possible risks that would exclude us from the study were disclosed. We are both well.

We appeal to the students, faculty, staff and alumni of Dillard, Xavier, and our sibling institutions to consider participating in this trial or others being conducted. The people and communities we serve look to us as an example. Our participation in such studies will help find ways to better fight the pandemic.

As presidents of HBCUs, we do recall unethical examples of medical research. We remember the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, which misused and caused harm to African Americans and other people of color, undermining trust in health providers and caretakers. Today, there are many regulations in place to assure the ethical execution of medical studies, including oversight by Human Subjects Committees with diverse membership and participation of clinicians of color. Two of the leading physicians are [Drs. Julia Garcia Diaz](#) and [Yvens Laborde](#).

We hope that you will consider enrolling. You may send an email to [COVIDVaccine@ochsner.org](mailto:COVIDVaccine@ochsner.org) or leave a message at (504) 703-8283 to receive more information. We have before us a significant opportunity to serve and advance the cause for not just ourselves, but our sisters and brothers suffering from the effects of this virus on their families and communities.

**We are Dillard. We are Xavier.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Verret".

C. Reynold Verret  
Xavier University of Louisiana

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Walter M. Kimbrough".

Walter M. Kimbrough  
President, Dillard University