

Community Service Office

In September 2007, the Community Service Office introduced a University-wide blood drive initiative, featuring a single-day blood drive in 12 locations spanning across Danforth Campus, West Campus, North Campus, and the School of Medicine. We are working in collaboration with American Red Cross and Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center, and we are optimistic that this University-wide approach will quickly become a campus tradition that helps maintain a robust blood supply for our region. There are many ways to be involved as a blood donor and/or volunteer, and we hope you'll learn more and sign up at www.communityservice.wustl.edu.

As we draw broader attention to blood drives within the University community, we expect that many will raise questions about the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) policies that limit the participation of some members of our community. We hope you will learn more about this issue so that you can respond to students and colleagues in an informed and sensitive way.

In 1983, the FDA implemented a lifetime ban on blood donations from men who have had sex with men (MSM), even once, since 1977. While this ban was instituted in the early days of the AIDS crisis, recent advances in blood screening technology have called its continued implementation into question. America's Blood Centers (which includes Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center), the American Association of Blood Banks, and the American Red Cross have concluded that the medical and scientific justifications for a lifetime deferral are no longer appropriate, and support a reexamination of this policy by the FDA. (You can read the FDA's position on the issue at www.fda.gov/cber/faq/msmdonor.htm)

While we are driven by the mission of our blood drive and believe it is a powerful way to support each other at a time when 1 in 3 of us will need a blood transfusion in our lives, we want to be sensitive and responsive to those who are troubled by this policy. Our hope is to empower students, staff, and faculty with the necessary knowledge and support to respond, to act, and to voice their concerns in a constructive manner. We hope you will join us in demonstrating respect and concern for the emotional response this policy will invoke in members of our community, and we are eager to collaborate with students, staff, and faculty to build a dialogue and response to this issue that is proactive and constructive.

Thank you for your attention and concern for those students or colleagues who may reach out to you for support or consolation when they learn about this deferral. We welcome your comments and ideas, and encourage you to be in touch with either of us to discuss this issue further. With your support, we can make a much-needed contribution to our nation's blood supply at the same time that we engage members of the campus community in an educational and constructive dialogue about a serious public policy issue.

Sincerely,

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