Q. Can you get affected [infected] again after recovering?
That is definitely a question many scientists are trying to answer. There have been a couple reports of individuals who tested positive a second time after clearing infection, so it does seem possible, although it is rare so far, but remember, this virus has only been infecting humans since late December, 2019, so we don't know how much reinfection will increase with increased time from initial infection.

We do know that for other human coronaviruses, after some period of time, most people do become susceptible again, so it seems likely that immunity once someone has successfully cleared the infection will decrease with time. (Dr. McLoon)

At this point, we have had case reports of 2 individuals being reinfected with genetically distinct viruses. One was asymptomatic the second time, the other was symptomatic both times. (Dr. Smith)

Q. What do you see as the path forward from where we are now?
I think there are several paths forward. The best would be to have widespread fast and convenient testing, combined with broad public adoption of face masks, limits to socializing that are appropriate to local circumstances, and contact tracing with enforceable quarantine and isolation.

Q. What is your opinion having colleges open without regular testing of students? I'm sure it depends on the county but considering students come from different regions? I know you mentioned U of Illionois is testing twice a week. I don't recommend colleges reopen without frequent testing of all on campus, although the frequency can be adapted to local circumstances and college types.

Q. What would be the most effective way to get the public population to test for the virus, including people who may not believe that they are carrying the virus?
That's more a question for social scientists – the human behavior experts. The only options seem to be enforced testing (for access to work/school/stores) or leadership to encourage testing and counteract misinformation.

Q. What is the best test to get once you start showing symptoms
PCR tests are the best tests to detect active infection. If you are showing COVID-19 symptoms, please contact health services right away if you are a student, and please either stay in your room or if you are a commuter, don’t come to campus if you may have COVID-19 while waiting for your appointment with Health Services. (Dr. McLoon)

Q. why is there such a wide range of cases. why do we see some get it and be asymptomatic, some get it and have mild symptoms and some get it and be hospitalized. these cases are seen in the elderly, middle aged people, children and the younger population. is there any research being done to better explain?
We don’t know. There is research being done, but it is very complicated and will be ongoing for years before we have a clear picture.

Q. What are the recommendations for colleges to reopen safely? Is it truly safe for colleges to do so?
Colleges can reopen safely, in my opinion, if: 1) local transmission is low; 2) fast, frequent testing is available and enforced; 3) social distancing is used as much as possible and masks are used when not; 4) local public health departments are available and willing to partner with the colleges; 5) the entire college community is willing to do their part.

Are there any current plans to help the minority areas?
As right now, local and state health departments are primarily responsible for action in particular regions, and thus the answer is specific to a particular state or town. New York state and Albany county are working to improve testing access to higher poverty minority areas, for instance, through mobile testing so individuals can walk up and get tested within their own neighborhood.

It is also important to have contact tracers with the appropriate language skills and cultural knowledge to, for instance, work effectively with our local immigrant communities.

But, it is also true that COVID-19 isn’t the only disease that is disproportionately affecting poor minority communities. Until we as a state and nation commit to dismantling policies and attitudes that for decades have led to unequal access to resources including but not limited to healthcare, we will continue to see higher rates of disease in poor minority communities. I hope that together, we will be the generation that follows through and makes the needed changes. (Dr. McLoon)

How is the distribution of tests decided? because some areas are able to get tested often while others struggle to get a test and have to be approved by their doctor first

Currently, this is being decided at the state and local level. Here in New York, anyone can be tested for free at one of the state testing sites; it does not require a doctor’s approval. I believe the closest site is a drive through testing station in a parking lot at UAlbany. If you did not get a COVID test before arriving on campus and wish to get tested (or did get a test but wish to get tested again), here is the website with information https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/find-test-site-near-you. Note that not all of the sites on the map are run by the state, and some may require insurance or have specific requirements. (Dr. McLoon)

Do you think that antigen or antibody testing is more effective?
Both tests have their pros and cons. PCR tests have a lower false positive rate and are generally effective for determining if a person currently has an active infection.

In contrast, antibody tests can help determine if someone has been infected but isn’t currently infected. They are not as good for determining active infection because there is a lag between infection and when the body begins producing detectable levels of antibodies, and there is a higher rate of false positives because an antibody test is not looking for the virus itself, but is looking to see if your body can respond to the virus as if it were infected. It is possible to produce antibodies that will recognize this virus without infection. (Dr. McLoon)

Would we benefit from people taking the antibody test?
At this time, the antibody test is most useful in those who were previously infected, either to confirm infection when a test was not available at the time of infection, or to identify potential donors for convalescent plasma.