

Friday, March 13, 2020

Hello DMH family!

Has this work week really only been 5 days? Feels so much longer, and ending on a Friday the 13th seems appropriate! I want to thank all of you for your flexibility, professionalism, and eagerness to jump in a help in this dynamic and challenging time. We made it through our first virtual faculty meeting pretty well, and the students and faculty handled the transition to online term 3 finals with grace. I am so grateful to have this amazing team of faculty, staff, and students working together to make sure we continue our mission of public mental health research, education, and practice.

Despite the flurry of emails you are already getting, I wanted to make sure you have an update from the department on a regular basis, so we will aim for an update every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for the next week or two. While things are clearly still in flux, here is what we understand today:

Education: Term 3 courses are completed, with virtual final assessments where possible. Thank you to all the term 3 faculty for handling this, and to our amazing students for your resilience through this remarkable change. All term 4 DMH instructors have now worked with Judy Bass to prepare for virtual teaching and also received an email from Laura Morlock with information and resources. We believe all of our 4th term instructors now have Zoom Pro to deliver their course sessions virtually via zoom. Instructors and TAs will work together to set up discussion groups, or other formats to facilitate non-lecture aspects of learning. One important note to faculty – the School strongly encourages use of headsets for zoom instruction, so if you do not already have a headset, please let Judy Bass know. Students, please plan to attend your 4th term classes per the schedule assigned. While the zoom sessions will be recorded, the general expectation is that you will attend during the regularly scheduled live session. For international students, OIS sent out guidance about visa status that should answer any questions you may have. Please contact Judy Bass, Jeanine Parisi, or Patty Scott if you have specific questions.

Research: Strategies for modification of research practices are still being formed and much is still uncertain. Greg Kirk should be sending out further guidance very soon. Items to consider: If you have in-person contact as part of your data collection, there will be mandatory telephone screening about covid-like symptoms prior to having in-person contact with participants. Scripts and guidance will be provided soon. You should also consider asking your participant-engaged research staff to have COVID frequently asked question (FAQ) talking points and may need to guide them with some type of training. If you plan to change your data collection protocol as a result of COVID, you will need to submit an IRB amendment. They are ramping up capacity to turn these requests around very quickly. Adam Spira is monitoring all of this in collaboration with Vice Dean Kirk and IRB head Joan Petit, who will be sending out guidance emails soon. Please reach out to Adam with your questions.

Presence on campus: Currently, the buildings are open and people are coming to work and to study. However, we are encouraging people to minimize contact wherever possible: maintaining distance from each other (~6 ft), limiting the number of people gathered, and using zoom/teleconferencing wherever feasible. Heidi Conway, the JHU VP for HR, sent a note yesterday asking managers to create telework plans for their teams. Some of you have asked about faculty, staff, and students who need access to campus, such as hard-copy participant files, lab facilities, etc. Currently, such access is not restricted, but we are asking PIs and managers to think through contingencies should building access be restricted

in the future. Now is a great time to get your Slack or Microsoft Teams (or other collaboration software) up and running and make sure everyone knows how to effectively use it.

Travel: There are now restrictions on university-related travel. If you have upcoming work travel that is essential, this will need to be approved by Dean MacKenzie and Jane Schlegel. Please let Carlina know and we can facilitate a request.

Reimbursement: We have received some guidance regarding reimbursement of travel expenses incurred pre-trip and subsequently cancelled due to Covid. In general, you may seek reimbursement for travel expenses associated with, and incurred in support of, official Johns Hopkins business. Before seeking reimbursement, employees should contact the travel agency or vendor to request a refund. If the vendor issues a refund, no reimbursement will be processed. If the vendor refuses to issue a refund, a reimbursement request may be submitted. Expenses categories include: airline tickets, rail tickets, Hotel and lodging deposits/pre-payment. The expenses must have been incurred before March 11th, 2020. You will need applicable receipt with proof of payment and documentation from vendor denying the request for refund.

Wellness: The events surrounding this pandemic affect our mental health and wellbeing in many ways. People with mental illness may have exacerbated symptoms. Many of us are experiencing higher than typical levels of stress and uncertainty and may experience symptoms of anxiety and depression. Further, the limited personal contact or isolation resulting from quarantine measures can take its toll in many ways, as we know from studies of loneliness. Also, taking care of sick friends or family can certainly contribute to mental health challenges. For these reasons, the school is putting together a task force on faculty, student, and staff mental health in the context of COVID. I have volunteered to help guide this group. If you have any ideas about the mission or tasks for this group, please let me know!

A final note: Our work is needed now more than ever, and I continue to be amazed and inspired by the tireless work and generosity of our people here at the Bloomberg School and by each of you in DMH. I am so grateful to work with you and to be a part of the solution. As we strive to conquer this current crisis, please take care of yourselves. Reach out to each other when needed, and be mindful of your own wellness. Maybe we should institute a virtual Monday mindfulness for the department (Tamar?) and a Friday tea/beer/wine/lacroix group toast via zoom?

Please reach out with any questions. I will send another update Monday.

Warmly,

Dani