

## COVID Updates DMH

**Monday April 13, 2020**

Dear DMH family,

I hope you all enjoyed the weekend! For many of us, this past week was an opportunity to savor new ways of bonding despite difficult circumstances, particularly during holidays. For my family, it meant we could be a part of our New York family's Easter festivities for the first time, since everyone was virtual, and that both my Mom and my husband's Mom could join us for Easter services! (I did NOT however succeed in convincing my kids to dress up for a formal picture! The idea of church in pajamas is starting to grow very strong roots...) I have heard and seen pictures of seders enjoyed across states, and even countries, as well! Judy shared that she actually recorded their zoomed meal – which is an amazing way to capture memories of shared family experiences, particularly in this unique time.

We are now in week 4 of our 4<sup>th</sup> term, so students are facing finals in this new online-only system and instructors are finding ways to offer appropriate assessments. I know that some of you are lamenting the lack of group studying or one-on-one in person tutoring. I am sorry for that missed opportunity and I want to thank all of you again for your dedication to our educational mission and to your own personal education and growth in this unusual and uncertain time. Students, please reach out to your instructor, advisor, or friends if you are struggling in any way. We are eager to help.

Below are some new updates to begin the week:

**Education:** I know many of you are concerned about meeting academic milestones given the disruptions of the pandemic. We continue to put accommodations in place to ease this concern including the option for pass/fail in courses, extensions on MHS thesis due dates, and other exam or milestone timing accommodations. I wanted to also point out the Provost's email on Friday encouraging you to consult your advisor about any milestone timing concerns. If you find you need a formal extension in completing your degree requirements, such as postponing an exam or defense, please begin this conversation with your advisor, who can help decide whether a formal request is needed and how to proceed. We anticipate a great deal of flexibility around this. Some of you may also be experiencing extraordinary circumstances or hardships such as personal illness, care of another who is ill, or absence of academic activity or a considerable loss of progress due to laboratory, library/archive, foreign location, or human subjects research restrictions. We will work with you to accommodate disruptions; in cases where accommodations are insufficient, the School is developing an application process to request extended funding if these hardships will substantially affect your graduation timing.

**Research:** A reminder that NIH grant applications for due dates between March 9, 2020, and May 1, 2020 will now be accepted through May 1, 2020. For details click [here](#) and [here](#).

The School is continually updating resources for investigators here: [University HUB research site](#) and the [JHSPH IRB site](#).

We are also collecting information from each other in DMH (look out for email from Michelle Maffett/Adam Spira) about tools for remote research such as new IRB amendments, protocols for quantitative and qualitative remote data collection, consenting, etc. Adam will then make these available for sharing internally.

Also, reminding you of the University's [Research Response](#), and that the Community Research subgroup is working to facilitate measurement of the impact of COVID-19 among ongoing studies. Please complete the [linked survey](#) if you're interested in joining this effort and/or sharing your survey instruments.

**#ApartTogether:** The student group is organizing community-building activities throughout the term. There will be a virtual MHS Alumni Panel on Wednesday and a Movie watch party on May 15. Thank you Daniel Sonnenberg for organizing the movie! The Student Mental Health Group will be sending zoom login details. There is also a student happy hour plan in the works so stay tuned.

There will definitely be an end of year party (April 28, you should have gotten an email today). We are hoping some of you are willing to share your talents with the group during the party. We are also working on graduation-themed virtual events. Our next several Wednesday noon seminars will also be opportunities for community interactions. Wed, April 22, will be a panel discussion of the psychological fall-out of this pandemic and the ongoing research efforts and important questions to address. The following week, April 29, will be a "town hall" style session for question and answers and a debrief on the academic year, the current events, and the opportunities for the future. Finally, on May 6, we will have a discussion on self-care as we end the term. We are working on some specific tips, maybe a guided meditation, or a group walk! If you have ideas for virtual gatherings, challenges, etc., please let me know!

**Staying informed:** The School is using our [my.jhsph](#) site for internal communications and is a very helpful landing place for many things. Please check it out. In addition to listing all school email communications, has several useful buttons:

[Student FAQs](#); [Faculty FAQs](#); [Mental Health Task Force Resources](#)

Also, our department update emails are [here](#).

For external audiences, the main JHSPH site has a fantastic COVID [landing page](#) as well. Check it out for updated information on the pandemic and the public health efforts.

**Your own mental health and other pandemic tips:** Many of you have talked specifically about your struggles with caregiving responsibilities with work/school responsibilities. Please check out these new resource pages on [caregiving](#) and [parenting](#) as well as this one on [support for eating disorders](#) during quarantine. We continue to build additional pages as well, so please let me know if there is a particular topic you would like to see.

Several of you have also been busy writing about your own experiences or providing useful advice. Thank you! Here is a piece by [Calliope Holingue](#) and others, as well as tips for [addressing loneliness](#) from a past surgeon general, and some recent Q&As on [mental health](#).

**How can you contribute?** Thank you to those who have shared your own experiences in coping. Check out Kayla's [yoga practice here!](#) If you would like to write an op-ed or participate in a Q&A on mental or behavioral health during this pandemic, please reach out.

**For inspiration:** This is one of my favorite videos from the week. I admit it has a faith-based leaning, but the messages are universal and I found it touching:  
<https://youtu.be/zCYoikGal6U>.

Have a great week. Please continue to send any questions or concerns to me. We are eager to help in whatever ways we can. I am grateful to each of you for your hard work, flexibility, and resilience. What a wonderful group of people to share this unique experience with.

Warmly,

Dani