

COVID Updates DMH

Friday, June 5, 2020

Dear DMH family,

I ended my email last Friday with acknowledgement of the pain and anger felt by all of us following the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and so many others. Our nation's history reflects centuries of racism and marginalization of Black people, indigenous peoples, Latinx and many others and these events demonstrate how far we still have to go to achieve racial justice. This past week has been filled with deep emotional distress, particularly for our students, staff, and faculty of color, and we must support each other and stand together. The first items of this update address activities related to building an anti-racist agenda for our department and the school. I have also included other updates regarding pandemic-related activities to keep you in the loop. Please reach out with any concerns or questions. I am eager to help.

- **Anti-racist agenda.** At the School's leadership retreat earlier this week, we discussed ways in which the School can take substantive action. The School's [Diversity and Inclusion Initiative](#) has a number of [resources](#), including ways that you can get involved, and new initiatives are being planned. The National Museum for African American History and Culture also set up this [website](#) over the weekend that provides a curated deep dive on topics like bias, being anti-racist, systems of oppression, and community building. They have sections for parents and for educators.

We as a Department need to redouble our own commitment to social justice and equity in our scholarship, education, and practice efforts and in our interactions with each other. This week, DMH faculty, Renee M. Johnson, Rebecca Fix and Judy Bass, met with Joel Bolling, Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, to discuss ways our department can promote inclusivity in our research, practice and department community, and stimulate important anti-racist conversations and actions. Over the summer we will be working to set the stage for some new initiatives in the coming year that represent our commitment to justice. We are planning **small group listening sessions** to hear from students, staff and faculty and will be initiating a **department committee on diversity, equity, anti-racism, and inclusion**. We are also working on several other actions, including exploring how to **better incorporate social determinants, equity, and structural racism throughout our curriculum**.

We are looking for students to inform these listening sessions. If you are interesting in learning more or getting involved in any of these efforts, please reach out to Rebecca (Rebecca.fix@jhu.edu), Renee (rjohnson@jhu.edu), or Judy (jbass1@jhu.edu) to be connected with our ongoing planning.

- **Meetings and emails.** As I mentioned briefly last week, the School is promoting meeting-less workdays this summer. In addition, Keshia Pollack-Porter sent an [email outlining best practices for meetings and emails](#). As we all live this immersive virtual work life, these can help to improve the experience, show respect for each other's time and competing commitments, and give each other some grace.

- **Return to Research, Education, and Campus.** The university and school have put out a [few emails](#) in the past week covering [return to campus considerations](#), resumption of research, and planning for fall educational activities. These are each still very dynamic, so it is hard to give you up to date and accurate information, but I am hoping to keep you as informed as possible. **What we do know for sure is that there will be courses in the fall! and that we must make them available via virtual or online modes.** If you are a term 1 or term 2 instructor, Judy Bass and Patty Scott have likely already contacted you to discuss this. If you are a TA, you will need to make sure you are trained for virtual and online assistance. The school and our department will be offering help for you. Finally, if you are a student, please know that your courses will be available even if you choose not to be here physically. For those eager to be on campus for in-person training, the school and university are working daily on plans that will enable some in-person elements to training, in collaboration with our faculty who are providing real-time advice on the best public health-minded strategies.
- **Mental Health and Wellness.** These are tough times. I hear from many of you how you are struggling with grief, including loss of loved ones to covid, continued stress and anxiety over competing demands including work and child care, general anxiety and sadness due to social distancing measures, and frustration and anger over the inequities made so vivid by this pandemic and the recent acts of racism. I want you to know you are not alone. We are all experiencing these challenges and we in DMH know there are prevention and treatment options for emotional distress. Please take advantage of them. I have listed some resources again below:
 - [44 Mental Health Resources for Black People Trying to Survive in This Country](#)
 - [JHSAP](#) (Johns Hopkins Student Assistance Program)
 - JHU [mySupport](#) is offering Coping with COVID webinars **every Wednesday at 4.** Sign up [here](#).
 - [UHS Wellness](#): Serves students, post-doctoral fellows, house staff and other trainees across the School of Medicine, Bloomberg School of Public Health, School of Nursing, and the Berman Institute.
 - [JHU Chaplain](#): Available to have phone conversations with JHU affiliates; please email Kathy Schnurr at kschnurr@jhu.edu for appointments.
 - [SilverCloud](#): Online confidential mental health resource for JHU students; includes interactive learning modules that teach CBT (cognitive-behavioral therapy) techniques.
 - [Calm App](#): Use your JHU email to access all premium features) for mindfulness, sleep and guided meditation exercises.

As always, I am grateful for all of you and all that you do. Summer Institute is in full swing and I know that is taking additional time. However, I hope that each of you is finding a way to make space for quiet moments, things that bring you happiness, and things that promote your own health. Here at my house,

this has taken the form of new flowers to enjoy while sitting in my backyard. Oh, and the puppy 😊



Warmly,

Dani