

COVID Updates DMH

Friday, March 20

Hello DMH family,

I am so proud of all of us for making it through this week! I doubt any of us will ever forget “spring break” 2020. I have seen some amazing things this week: a *de novo* research team form collaborations on the mental health response to covid that is now going to be deployed in multiple countries, the formation of a task force of dedicated faculty, staff, and students across the Bloomberg School who are eager to help promote mental wellness at this challenging time, quick and deep engagement of faculty and students to prepare for online learning with a single week’s notice, a multitude of zoom-based meetings and happy hours, and my 10 year old’s first true attempt at mountain biking, including his first authentic fall and busted bike (but not busted kid thank goodness)!

In the midst of these inspiring acts, I have also seen people struggle with disappointment, uncertainty, and frustration. I want you to know that we are all experiencing these feelings. I am deeply disappointed for the students who will not get to share an in-person graduation ceremony this May, or to present an in-person final defense. I also empathize with all who are worried about how to manage both work and home life in the same space, and those who are worried about career demands, deadlines, graduation requirements, and promotions. We cannot give solutions to all of these concerns just yet, but I want you to know that the School’s leadership is very aware of these concerns and is working towards solutions. I will continue to update you as things evolve, and please reach out with questions or concerns so that we can make sure the department and School are engaged in the current concerns of our faculty, staff, students, and fellows.

As we end the week, here are a few updates and reminders:

Your mental health: If you are feeling overwhelmed emotionally or for any reason need support, please take advantage of resources available to you. Students: [JHSAP](#); Faculty, fellows, and staff: [MySupport](#). A more complete compendium of mental health resources is coming soon!

Email overload? If you cannot keep track of all the emails, remember all school-level emails can be found [here](#) and department updates can be found [here](#).

Fourth term starts on Monday and will remain online for the full term. We have wonderful courses and instructors who are ready to teach in an alternative format, and students who I am confident are going to rise to the challenge of remote learning.

- If you are an instructor or TA who needs assistance, please reach out to [Judy Bass](#).
- If you are as student who needs assistance with courses or if you have questions about program requirements, etc, please don’t hesitate to reach out to your program director ([Judy or Jeanine Parisi](#)) and to [Patty Scott](#). That is what we are here for!

Research transitions: As you saw in emails from Greg Kirk and from the Provost’s office, we have moved to suspension of in-person and on-campus research activities except those related to covid and a few other special circumstances. If you are able, movement to digital data collection is a good solution and can keep your project moving forward. The school and the IRB have provided guidance. If you have

questions, please reach out to [Adam Spira](#). I recognize the hardship and concern this creates. Please know we are in this together and if we can help each other out, we should. If there are ways to continue research remotely, we can find them. Students, I know this may be a particular concern for you given timelines for graduation. Program directions and the Dean's office are aware of these concerns and thinking through ways to address these issues. All of us also have concerns over funding timelines and milestones. Please work with your funders and with [Carlina Carter](#) with particular questions and strategies moving forward. Most funders have indicated their intentions to be flexible given the extraordinary circumstances.

Team science: Many of us are becoming experts on zoom, Microsoft teams, slack, and other forms of digital collaboration. If you are NOT feeling so expert, check out these resources from the school of medicine: [Zoom Web conferencing](#); [Connecting during COVID-19](#). Please also ask for help! [Dani](#), [Adam](#), and [Judy](#) have experience and can help you trouble shoot.

Call for volunteers: The IRB has asked us to create a FAQ for research teams that are interacting (digitally) with research participants. They anticipate that participants, like the rest of us, will have heightened concerns related to COVID and may ask questions since our teams represent Hopkins. The IRB believes it will be helpful to provide an FAQ to research teams to help them with any questions that arise. If any of you have already prepared such a document, or are willing to do this, I would be very appreciative!

Community: Lastly, one of the best things about our department, from my perspective, is our community and the feeling of family. I have no doubt that this will continue! In that spirit, I think it is important that we have some virtual community events. These will not be mandatory, but rather to help us connect socially and open if you are available. The educational program directors will be organizing events for the MHS, doctoral, and post-doctoral programs, and the Chair's office will be organizing faculty and department-wide events. These will likely include zoom lunches, happy hours, tea times, outing challenges (think hikes, runs, walks, etc), or other activities, with the goal of fostering community and mutual support. Stay tuned for scheduling and let us know if you have some ideas!

Please focus on having a wonderful weekend, particularly as the transition from weekday to weekend is less distinct. Despite the new challenges and worries, this is an important opportunity for us as public health researchers, educators, and practitioners to come together to show the power of public health, the power of our people, and the power of partnerships. The importance of our mental health work is apparent and motivating. Take care of yourselves, take care of each other, and reach out with concerns or challenges. We will try to get answers and facilitate learning and research in this new environment.

Thank you all for your passion and professionalism. I continue to feel so inspired and grateful for all of you.

Dani