

COVID Updates DMH

Friday, May 29, 2020

Dear DMH family,

After a long and challenging term 4 and some heartfelt graduation celebrations, I hope you have each begun to settle into the new rhythm that is summer. Here at my house, although term 4 is done, summer institute has set in, and the elementary school being run out of my second floor is still in full swing. However, the warmer days and sprouted vegetables in our garden have been welcome reminders that summer is indeed arriving and that hopefully a more relaxed pace is ahead.

In this email, I want to point you to several updates, mainly about fall and about resources:

First, many of you, like me, have been wondering what summer and fall will look like for the Bloomberg School. I hope you have read through the [emails from Dean MacKenzie's office and from JHU](#). I want to highlight the JHU emails from 5/28 on returning to campus guidelines, and from 5/19 on returning to research, and the JHSPH email from 5/20 on contingency planning for the fall term. Students, you received a similar JHSPH email today.

Second, I want to thank all of you who are currently teaching summer institute courses. We have a record enrollment this year thanks to your hard work and dedication! A particular thank you to Michelle Carlson, Michelle Maffett, and Patty Scott for making an all-virtual SI a reality!

Third, I want to highlight several resources and items of interest regarding your own mental health and wellbeing:

- Upcoming webinars: JHU [mySupport](#) is offering Coping with COVID webinars **every Wednesday at 4**. Sign up [here](#).
- Recent and upcoming **podcasts**: Many of the Public Health on Call Podcasts have included mental health related content including guests from our department and affiliates. Check out particularly:
 - 082 - Mental Health Q&A Round 2: Reframing, Dealing With Uncertainty, Dismantling Stigma, and More – Laura Murray
 - 067 - COVID-19 Mental Health Care Q&A With a Clinical Psychologist – Laura Murray
 - 076 - How COVID-19 is Impacting Sex Workers and People Who Use Drugs and Why Helping Them is Necessary for Everyone's Survival – Susan Sherman
 - 071 - Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in the COVID-19 Pandemic – Elizabeth Letourneau
- School **NO MEETING days**: The Dean has declared June 15, July 15, and Aug 14 as NO MEETING days to help empower us all to protect a little time for productivity and rejuvenation. We have moved our faculty meetings to accommodate this and hope you will do the same with any meetings you are able to control. Particularly as we all remain working from home, zoom meetings can get overwhelming! In addition to these full days of no meetings, Keshia Pollack-Porter is also preparing some guidance on meeting and email etiquette to help us minimize the content of emails, maximize efficiency of meetings, and recognize the need for boundaries on meeting times, particularly for faculty, staff, and students who are simultaneously holding the roles of caregiver, home-school teacher, camp leader, house cleaner, dog-walker, etc..

- **Other avenues for support.** Many of you have expressed frustration over the competing demands of work, training, teaching, research, parenting, other caregiving, and relationship management, all while trying to maintain your physical and mental health. It is simply not possible to be a full-time faculty, staff, or student as well as a full-time caregiver, and all the other general personal responsibilities we each have. I have hit my own wall with this, frankly. First, I want to share that it is absolutely ok to set boundaries with your time as this pandemic evolves. If you are in charge of children or parents, or your community, during certain windows, say so, and block that time from school/work meetings to the best extent you can. Be clear with your colleagues so expectations are managed. But this is not enough. So, I am asking each of you to make suggestions about how we can help each other during this time. Michelle Kaufman, in HBS, wrote [this](#) and I think there are a lot of good ideas here. I had been toying with strategies for food or meal prep rotations, virtual childcare (kid zooming or activities), or other aids that we could collectively volunteer for using something like sign-up genius, but I am very open to suggestions.

Fourth, I want to highlight the covid-related work of several DMH faculty that is now available on our websites:

- [Mental Health and COVID](#)
- [COVID Family Resource Page For Child Sexual Abuse Prevention](#)

Fifth, here are the links to stay informed:

- As a reminder, the School is using our [my.jhsph](#) site for internal communications and is a very helpful landing place for many things, including all COVID-related emails, and [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.
- If you are submitting a **COVID-related grant proposal**, please let your budget person know. The school is tracking these separately.
- Adam Spira has collected examples of virtual data collection and IRB amendments. Please contact him if you would like help in this regard. The School is continually updating resources for investigators here: [University HUB research site](#) and the [JHSPH IRB site](#).

Finally, I want to end by recognizing how challenging this past week, in particular, has been for so many. In the midst of our grief over losing 100,000 people to COVID in the US, and the challenges of handling the disruptions of life caused by this pandemic, we have this week been brutally reminded that the health and societal inequities revealed during this pandemic are not limited to differential impacts of diseases. Many of us have felt deep despair over the events of this past week, that are sadly not new themes, but tragically highlighted by George Floyd and other events. As a white woman, I am not in a position to feel this pain in the same way as many of you, but we as a department can amplify the voices of those impacted, can acknowledge the pain and anger felt by so many of our own DMH family as well as our society, and can sharpen our focus on addressing disparities and racism in particular. It is critical to address mental and behavioral inequities, many of which stem from, or are exacerbated by, discrimination.

As always, I am moved and inspired by your actions, your hard work, your dedication, and above all, your empathy for each other and for our community. Thank you for all you are doing. Please reach out with ways that we can collectively help each other, and please find ways to take care of yourself while accomplishing all of the amazing things you are each doing.

Warmly,

Dani