

Monday March 16, 2020

Dear DMH family,

I want to start by congratulating all of us on making it through today! A lot has transpired since my update on Friday, and today was the beginning of a new era for many of us. I met with many of you via zoom or on the telephone today, and I can tell you I am just so damn inspired by your compassion, optimism, and determination during this unprecedented situation. I also got to spend some amazing time with my own family, which is a gift I don't usually get on a Monday, and one I hope you are all finding a way to savor in the midst of so much disruption. For me, the opportunity to engage with my husband and boys in new ways is an amazing silver lining – although of course also challenging.

So, on to the updates – which are many.

1. **Communications to the public:**

First, thank you to Liz Stuart and Laura Murray for their work over the weekend writing op-eds for public distribution! Liz was part of a team of Bloomberg faculty (with Justin Lessler, Keri Althoff, Craig Pollack) who put together a piece on parenting, kids, and social distancing in the service of public health. Check it out in USA Today: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/03/16/schools-closed-but-children-can-still-spread-coronavirus-column/5054108002/>

Laura Murray prepared a piece to help us all with the anxiety associated with this pandemic, including some important suggestions for each of us. I highly recommend it, found in this Baltimore Sun op-ed released today: <https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/op-ed/bs-ed-op-0317-coronavirus-stress-cope-20200316-u5vacvgy6zbqvdun2roa3dkdoe-story.html>

2. **Mental health – related research on COVID response:**

I also want to recognize and thank many of you who worked tirelessly over the weekend to initiate research that can help us understand the immediate and long-term mental and behavioral health consequences of this pandemic.]

Holly Wilcox is guiding students in her DrPH problem-solving course on suicide on a project to monitor suicidal ideation in the cities where the students themselves are responsible for their city's response to COVID,

Liz Stuart, Calliope Holingue, Renee Johnson, Luke Kalb, Johannes Thrul, and Cindy Veldhuis (a faculty candidate from our recent Assistant Professor search) are working with a colleague at the University of Maryland to create a set of survey questions on mental and behavioral health to be deployed to multiple ongoing survey panels to help monitor the psychological response in the US.

Greg Kirk is looking for folks across the school interested in, or already engaged in, covid-related research. If you are already, please let me know if you too are working on a new project regarding COVID response. If you are interested, please let Adam and me know as soon as possible.

3. **Presence on campus:** One of the biggest changes from Friday's update is the guidance from Provost Kumar and Dean MacKenzie that we should avoid coming to campus if at all possible. Please work from home. If you must come to your office or research space for some reason, please let Carlina, Adam, and me know and we can help you plan arrangements. There will be a time when entrance is restricted.

4. **Research activities:**

The next biggest change since Friday is based on the guidance from the Provost,

Denis Wirtz, and Greg Kirk (you should have received emails), that all non-essential research activities that involve in-person data collection in the US or on-campus research must be suspended. If you can move to electronic data collection, you should already be initiating that process. IRB guidance is being provided as to how to modify your protocols quickly to enable this. If you have questions about this (I am sure many of you do!), please reach out to Adam and cc me. This is an incredibly difficult step, and we all recognize the consequences, but essential for the public's health. The school has every indication that funding agencies, federal and others, will be understanding about these delays in terms of progress reports, target numbers, etc. Please also note that the provost's office, and the School, acknowledge the potential slow down in your own productivity and have discussed how to accommodate this in promotion considerations. Please stay tuned on that front.

5. **Education:**

You saw from emails (from Laura Morlock and likely Judy Bass if you are a 4th term instructor), we continue plans to deliver all coursework online next week as term 4 begins. Judy Bass remains willing and able to help you plan for this. The processes for fully online doctoral departmental, school-wide, and final oral exams is now available, and Liz Stuart has sent emails to those who will be affected in the next two weeks. If you have questions as a student or advisor, please reach out to Judy.

6. **Wellness:**

If you are having any of the same responses and emotions I am, you are feeling anxious, sad, and potentially overwhelmed. These are completely understandable in this situation. Please take care of yourself: sleep, eat, exercise, meditate, seek companionship via zoom or other social outlets, stick to routines, set new routines, moderate your news intake, whatever coping strategies you find work for you. Also, please check in with each other and find ways to stay engaged. I find video is much more personal than simple audio. In this regard, as I mentioned, we are mounting a COVID mental health task force for the School. Several of you have already indicated interest. I will keep you posted about next steps and certainly share with you the suggestions and programming we plan as it rolls out.

I want to thank you all again for your extraordinary resilience and flexibility. I am proud to be a part of this team and proud of what you have already accomplished. I am honestly looking forward to what is next because I am confident that each of us are going to rise to this occasion to show each other and the world what public health is at its best and why public mental health is so important.

I will plan another update on Wednesday. In the meantime, the emails from the school and university are being collected in a single location on my.jhsph.edu if you are getting lost in the email soup: <https://my.jhsph.edu/Resources/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx>. If you would like previous DMH emails since the COVID crisis began, we will post these on our website soon. In the meantime, please send a request to Michelle Maffett. Please also feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Warmly,
Dani