

COVID Updates DMH

Monday May 11, 2020

Dear DMH family,

Happy Monday! Congratulations on making it nearly through this term! It is hard to believe we are in our last week of the final term. Friday also marked our first virtual dissertation defense in the department. Congratulations Lindsey Webb for your fantastic work!

Students, I wish you the very best during finals and final projects. I hope you are able to find time to sleep, eat, exercise, and reflect on what you have learned throughout the year and importantly what you have accomplished in the past 2 months. These are unprecedented times and you have risen to this challenging occasion. Faculty and staff, congratulations to you as well for completing a term completely virtual – a feat we have never before accomplished – and continuing your administrative and research activities in this new context with competence and a generosity of spirit. I acknowledge this has not been an easy road.

Here are some hopefully helpful updates as we enter this final week of the academic year.

Graduation:

- For those of you graduating, congratulations again! You should have received invitations from school for the Bloomberg commencement and from the department for our own “brunch” sessions. We are requesting your RSVP and information on any friends and family who will also attend the department event. We are excited to get to have a **real-time celebration with you**. We are incredibly proud of your accomplishments and look forward to your careers, knowing you will be ambassadors for public mental health!

Summer:

- I personally, am eager to move into the more relaxed routine of summer (read: no homeschooling!), armed with some newly acquired stay-at-home skills. I am also hoping to catch up on some of our non-covid work, to continue to engage with each of you, and to plan for the fall.
- Our summer will start with our first ever **fully virtual summer institute**. Thank you to Michelle Carlson, Michelle Maffett, Patty Scott, and Caitlin Hoffman for getting us ready in a hurry, and to all of our instructors for being flexible in the new format and in adding pandemic-related content. I am excited to see these courses implemented!
- As for the rest of summer, we will **continue our stay-at-home strategies in terms of campus access**. This also means no school-related gatherings, such as our planned retreat or symposia, even off-campus. If you had events planned for this summer, please let us know so that we can help you strategize alternatives. Those of you who have had to access campus for specific reasons will continue to be able to do so, but please let Carlina know first so that you are on appropriate lists.

- We will also **offer some professional development sessions** this summer for post-docs, doctoral students, and graduated MHS students, so stay tuned for specific invitations, and please send any specific requests or ideas to me.

Re-opening plans:

- I am sorry I don't yet have concrete details about fall plans. I can tell you that the **university and the school have convened committees to plan evidence-informed re-opening efforts**. The University committee has multiple workgroups tasked with: Research; Academic Programs (separate committees for undergrad and graduate program); Student life; Health and testing; Critical support functions. The JHSPH committee will have similar foci, particularly for academic and training plans and return to research activities. I will continue to update you as options and timing information become available.
- Dean MacKenzie is also planning **town halls** for faculty, staff, and students to discuss plans as they evolve. You should have received an email invite to the faculty/staff-focused session for this Thursday @ 4PM. A session for continuing students will be held May 27 at 1 pm, and one for incoming students is being planned.
- Importantly, we in the department will use the summer to prepare for fall. Given that at least some students will need to access our content virtually, we are hoping to organize some **training sessions about online learning and online teaching** for faculty, students, and TAs. We are also planning **sessions on maintaining our mental health and wellness, and on supporting the mental health and wellness of our students**, particularly as pandemic-related safety measures continue.
- **I can tell you that we will indeed be hosting classes term 1!**... we just don't yet know what form this will take. It is important that each of us faculty stay engaged with our students as we plan for the fall. The current doctoral students have already had a zoom check-in with the incoming students (thank you!!), and I **encourage each advisor to check-in with both incoming and returning students and post-docs** throughout the summer to help plan for the fall.

Social reminder:

- **You are invited to a movie watch party hosted by Daniel Sonnenberg, MHS student, and the MHSG!** We're getting the Department of Mental Health together to **watch the only movie specifically about the National Institute of Mental Health (kind of)!** Let's all unwind on the last day of an extraordinary academic year by watching this animated classic about the trials of family and friends, the mysteries of the labs of NIMH, and the adventures of the heroic Mrs. Brisby.

ZOOM: Time: May 15, 2020 04:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada) | [Join Zoom Meeting](#): Meeting ID: 956 194 7170. Password: NIMHrod

Contact tracing: Many of you, particularly graduating MHS students, have asked about contact tracing positions. Jeanine has sent you some information, but I wanted to pass along to everyone that JHSPH has now mounted a [Free Online Contact Tracing](#)

[Course](#). This may be of interest to all of us, but is certainly a good thing to take and refer to if you are seeking a contact tracing position!

Staying 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](#).

For fun: Check out the [new puppy's](#) impression of the stay-at-home experience. Also, if you missed our end of year virtual party, here is my [poem](#).

Thank you all again for all that you do and all of your generosity of time and spirit. I want to take a moment to recognize that the summer will hopefully be a time for rejuvenation, but will also be hard for many of us, particularly for childcare, with limited travel, and other challenges. We are in this together. We will continue to seek ways to support each other. Please reach out with any requests or ideas you have about wellness needs, skills building, or concerns you have during the summer.

Warmly,

Dani