

Friday, December 18, 2020

Dear DMH family,

I am thrilled to see 2020 coming to an end! How about you? I think I can speak for everyone to say we are exhausted, emotionally and physically. This historic year has been really tough in so many ways.

Yet, there have been many moments of pride, kindness and gratitude this year to counter the anxiety, pain, and other difficulties we have faced. I want to take this opportunity on the last day of the academic term to say congratulations. You did it! We did it! Students, you persisted through an entirely virtual fall of two difficult terms, making online classmate friends, and developing your faculty and staff mentoring networks and research projects. You stuck to it, gave each other grace, and hopefully also learned new things! Faculty and TAs, you honed new virtual skills of presentation and engagement and delivered high quality courses to be proud of. And staff, you kept your eyes and efforts on our mission, continuing you administrative, practice, and research work with tenacity, quality, and even enthusiasm!

I wanted to end this term (and year) with a few reminders, all in one place, so you don't have to go fishing through emails to find information.

**First, some bad jokes to start your weekend:** Where does a snowman keep his money? - In a snow bank; What did the gingerbread man put under his blankets? - A cookie sheet; What does an elf study in school? - The elfabet.

**Plans for third term:** As you know, there is enthusiasm about the potential for some in-person hybrid educational activities for term 3, but we will generally remain a virtual campus with the exception of a possible hybrid MHS course. For those preparing to teach, you can find some helpful information in these [Teaching remotely](#) and [virtual resources](#) links. Liz Stuart also sent out a roadmap email today (attached). For those interested in following the COVID numbers, JHU also updated their [JHU COVID dashboard](#).

**Historical reckoning:** As you saw in emails from the Dean and JHU President this week, we are confronting [difficult truths about our Hopkins history](#) and how this shapes our institution today. Instead of turning a blind eye, we will commit to justice, both within and outside the walls of Hopkins. In our department, I am energized and inspired by the work of our MHIDEAS and DEI committees and eager to implement their plans in the new year.

**Planning our Future Campus:** Hopefully you all saw the email from Dean MacKenzie about our current feasibility study to plan a vision for our future campus, including reshaping our current spaces and potentially adding a new building. There is an active [survey](#) on the my.jhsph.edu portal to solicit your input, and a full website about this will go live in the next week or two, where you can learn more about the feasibility study activities and progress.

**Wellness:** As I said above, this year has been tough on us all. Please remember our [COVID mental health resources](#). Also, as Keshia Pollack Porter's email today highlighted, the Chronicles of Higher Education: *How to Have a Restorative Holiday Break During a Pandemic* is a great reminder to:

- **Embrace the break** (=take consecutive days off!)
- **Plan a digital detox**
- **Start planning now** for a "lazy day" and also your go-to joyful activities.

- **Maybe Pursue a Physical Challenge; a Service Challenge; and a Connection Challenge**
- **Rejoice in the imperfection.** Trust that you can — and will — create a holiday that is restorative, uplifting, and fun, even under pandemic conditions. Let go of your perfectionist expectations, and let this year be delightfully different.

And finally, many of you observed the final night of Hannukah yesterday. The miracle of light in the Hannukah story is particularly meaningful this year; light is needed now more than ever. Here's hoping for more and more light over darkness as we head into 2021. I am so grateful to be entering the new year with each of you and truly looking forward to the bright future ahead!

Warmly,

Dani