

DMH Covid Update July 27, 2020

Hello DMH family,

I hope you have found a way to enjoy a somewhat slower pace this summer, and to savor time with your family, pets, neighbors, and (zoom) friends. I have held off sending updates in an effort to minimize your inbox, but I think a mid-summer check-in is hopefully useful. In this email, I want to update you on Covid research and education plans, remind you to reach out to your advisees and peers, remind you of resources for fall educational and social activities, and give you some updated mental health and wellness resource reminders.

Return to research and campus. I recognize the communications about returning to campus and to research have been confusing. There have been 3 separate threads of information sent from university and school channels. These are: (1) On-campus laboratory research return, (2) Human subjects research restart (see 7/9/2020 email [here](#)); and (3) On-campus presence plans (non-lab; see 7/22/2020 email from Greg Kirk and 7/16/2020 email from Denis Wirtz [here](#)). We don't have much wetlab considerations in our department, so the critical information for all of you in the HSR restart (#2) and in the on-campus presence requests (#3). **Adam Spira** is compiling a set of example documents for #2. Primary faculty should have received an email from him about this earlier today.

For #3, I would like to highlight a few details for our department procedures. First, as detailed in the 7/22/2020 email from Greg Kirk (link above), this is not an invitation to return to campus. It is meant to responsibly bring back research groups who have a specific need for regular campus access. His email outlines the process in detail, including rationale needed and safety plans. This is for recurring presence on campus. Casual attendance to pick up office items, for example, will follow the procedures already in place – simply contact Carlina. For recurring attendance requests, it may be easiest to consider research groups. Please identify any people in your group needing regular campus access for a specific reason. You will need to provide that rationale (see 7/22/2020 email and guidance in [this plan](#)). Examples include need to access hard copy files or campus-specific technology. Please note, seeking on-campus presence for a quieter or more controlled environment compared to home is not considered an acceptable rationale (although for many of us, so very true).

Adam has created [a form](#) in OneDrive FacultyShare (modified from the one on Greg's email) specific to our department requests. If you decide to request recurring presence, please submit this to Carlina. You are welcome to reach out to Adam or me if you have questions about your rationale or safety plans.

We believe one application per faculty member or research group is appropriate, given there is an option to list multiple names on the form; no need to do this separately for every project or every individual, as long as they are on the list in your form.

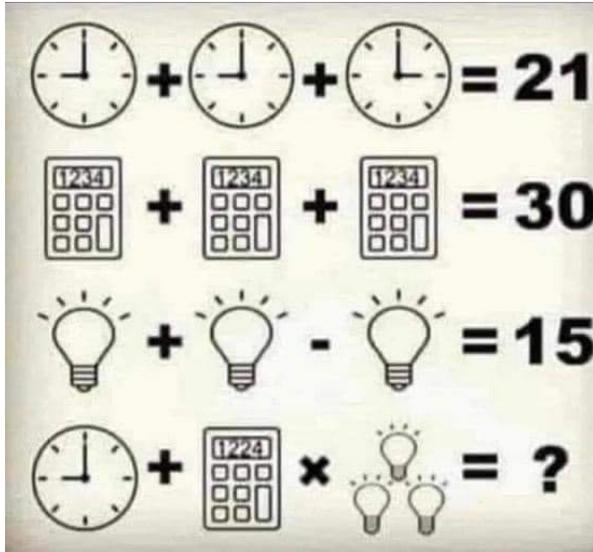
The main concern is shared workspace. If you are in a closed single-occupancy office, the risk is much less than for shared spaces, so please focus on the shared space plan. Carlina will help monitor capacity across research groups. Plans may have to be modified if too many groups seek to return simultaneously.

Checking in on each other. While we have each hopefully had a bit of rejuvenation since term 4, there have still been many challenges. Given we are spread across the globe, and that even those here in Baltimore have limited interactions due to social distancing, it is important that we be intentional about reaching out and checking on each other. Faculty, please reach out to your current and incoming advisees and to the staff working on your projects. Students, please seek support when you need it, we are eager to help in multiple ways. Please also check in on each other. I have heard of many examples of peer support already! Thank you! Lastly, staff, I recognize that many of your concerns are similar, but can be overlooked during the focus on educational activities and specific research needs. Please know that your contributions to this department and school are critical and we value your place in our community. I am hearing that most research groups are engaging in check-ins and zoom meetings with staff already, but if this is not your experience, please reach out to me so that we can make sure you still feel a part of this community while working from home.

Updates for fall. Thank you all for the hard work in preparation for a VirtualPlus fall (see [email on 7/20/2020](#)). The term is intentional, to highlight that our virtual status is more than simply online courses. We are actively engaging in research, practice, and education using virtual platforms. Each of you have been part of this experience and I have been impressed by the richness and quality in our interactions. This is important for us to remember, and particularly for students, who are nervous about whether they will get the full Bloomberg School experience of networking, research participation, service learning, and beyond. Please help reassure them and find opportunities for engagement through out the year, but particularly as they begin in the fall. We will have virtual orientation (Michelle sent an email to update your slides), some virtual department parties and social gatherings, and hopefully all of you are already hosting virtual group meetings or advising discussions. I am confident that we can make this a rewarding experience for our students, and that we will continue the very important and timely impact we are having through research and practice during this pandemic. Thank you as well for all of your preparation for teaching in the fall. If you have questions or needs, please reach out to **Judy Bass**, who is our faculty teaching liaison for the fall, and to **Kira Riehm**, who is our “super TA”. She will be learning all of the latest and greatest about online technology and pedagogy and thus able to act as a resource for all of you and your TAs as you prepare and implement your term 1 and term 2 virtual or fully online courses.

Protecting your health. The physical and mental health consequences of the pandemic and the many challenges of this moment in time are real and ongoing. I have distributed resource links in [past updates](#), and I hope they have been helpful. I want to remind you of the [JHU mental health resources available](#) to you and note particularly to check out the webinars put on by mySupport for faculty and staff. Also, many of you have expressed your concerns about productivity during this time and its effects on your career, often, but not solely, related to competing demands for childcare and other responsibilities. There is a university level committee seeking to address these issues, and we anticipate a report and action items from this committee very soon. In the meantime, please take a look at the [family resources here](#). I also remain very interested in hearing your ideas about how to help within our department. Ideas I have considered include creating infrastructure to help match volunteers with need for reading/crafts etc (like sign-up genius), for providing meals, or other experiences. I am also thinking about ways we can minimize expectations for committees, writing, etc., while still carrying on essential research and teaching tasks. There are not easy answers, but we are a creative and talented crowd, so hoping we can figure out some ways to help each other.

I am sorry for the length of this email. I wanted to make sure you had the information. I am grateful to be a part of this department and school, and particularly grateful to work with each of you. You know I like to insert a piece of fun in each of these, so today's version includes a brain teaser the administrative staff did together today on our call,



and some videos from Patapsco State Park that you could use as background calming while working, or maybe as your zoom background?

With warmth and virtual embraces,

Dani