Hello, PHS Community.

Thank you for your patience as we gathered the most up-to-date information from across the University with a goal of providing as comprehensive an overview as possible amid the current COVID-19 outbreak. Please take time to carefully review the following, which we hope will help us all to meet head-on what are still likely to be some extraordinary days ahead – with patience, understanding, and above all, resilience. Below are the latest PHS PhD updates:

**COURSES & REMOTE WORK**

As we are sure you are aware, all courses are expected to be offered and conducted online by ALL HARVARD SCHOOLS for the remainder of the spring semester. As such, any requirement or necessity to remain on any Harvard campus has been greatly curtailed – if not deemed almost entirely unnecessary, in the community-wide goal of curtailing potential prolonged exposure opportunities. *We should all anticipate that in-person courses and physical classes will not resume until at least summer (June), and therefore, we ask you and your advisors to agree upon a safe/workable location/environment for the remainder of the spring semester.*

**THE ONE CRUCIAL KEY TO THIS DISCUSSION IS THAT YOU MUST HAVE CONSISTENT ACCESS TO HIGH-SPEED INTERNET, REGARDLESS OF WHERE YOU MIGHT BE LOCATED DURING THIS REMOTE LEARNING PERIOD. Do not assume that a cell phone alone can provide you with a valid source of clear and concise participation/access to information, especially when society itself could potentially create undue strain on information-sharing, access, and IT resources. ABOVE ALL, please ensure that you have the necessary technology and access in place to support your academic actions throughout the spring semester.**

Additionally, if you are planning to leave the Greater Boston area for the duration or for a large part thereof, please do let Matthew know via e-mail (boccuzzi@hsph.harvard.edu) and consider registering your travel via Global Support Services if you haven’t already. With the situation evolving and currently expanding restrictions to both domestic and international travel (including those announced last evening by the White House), we urge you to use extreme caution and good judgment, especially because this is considered personal travel. We also encourage you to keep an eye on the Harvard Coronavirus website as things progress, in case there are any necessary steps for you to take upon returning to the University.

**QUALIFYING EXAMS**

If your Field of Study has indicated that you should be preparing for PQEs to take place at the end of the spring semester, please reach out to your specific Field re: the logistics and planning for that event. Please also note that if you intend to be far from campus for the remainder of the semester, you may need to return for in-person quals in some as-yet-to-be-determined format. Please also recognize that as the initial contingency planning is rapidly evolving and has taken most of everyone’s focus this week,
Fields may not necessarily have a formal plan/information that can be shared/actual location for a few more weeks.

**DISSERTATION DEFENSE PROCESS**

*Unfortunately, we have no choice but to transition to a virtual environment for all upcoming dissertation defenses – at least throughout the spring semester.* Bruce will be working closely with all of our upcoming PHS Defenders, their Advisors, and Field administrators over the next week or two to organize each set of defense participants through what now mandates a Zoom presentation – both for the DAC, as well as to an audience who will still have the opportunity to join via videoconference. More to come as we navigate this process individually with each defender, but one can expect the usual defense announcement to be posted to the PHS Pulse site – only now with a Zoom dial-in address vs. a room location. *Again, all can still participate and see the defense.* As a first step, Bruce will reach out directly to all May defenders and their Fields as follow-up to this message in order to begin on next steps.

**NEW ADMIT EVENT**

Although it greatly pains us to do so, we have officially canceled this year’s New Admit Event in April, and are currently working to provide a robust and still-relevant schedule of remote, dial-in events that will still enable us to cultivate our prospective 2020 cohort members. Matthew will be reaching out with specific requests for help over the next week. So, more to come on this soon!

**TESS**

*TESS is canceled for the remainder of the spring semester.* We will make sure that the intended presenters and content for the remaining sessions will somehow be shared with all 2019 students, either by recorded webinar or in-person with a modified schedule for next fall. Unfortunately, *Harvard Horizons* for this spring has also required cancellation by GSAS.

**PHS 2000B**

Thanks to the enormous efforts of Jarvis, David, and our truly incredible team of PHS 2000B TFs (Christopher, Emily, & Aayush!), PHS 2000B, its labs, office hours, exams, and all of its offerings will proceed online for the duration of the spring semester and with the help of Canvas and Zoom. In a word, *AMAZING.*

**PHS 2000B TUTORING**

We expect that tutors will continue to work with their students – on a schedule that you all arrange as you see fit, virtually or in-person. Please continue to keep these sessions to their allotted times, and tutors should continue to report their time as they would during any week in which class were actually physically in-session. As with last semester, tutor assignment/eligibility will be re-assessed following each PHS exam; more to come as follow-up to exam one.

**EVENTS**

All PHS events are canceled until further notice – including our annual PHS End-of-Year Block Party. We’ll make it up to you in the future, folks!
PHS STUDENT LOUNGE

While we are not officially closing the PHS Student Lounge and while coffee will remain available, we are going to highly discourage gatherings and expansive time spent in this area for meetings/work. We will ask for the space to be closely cleaned and sanitized by the cleaning staff, but please also be cognizant of germ-potential and make copious use of Purell and wipes once you finish using any of the resources available down there.

CONVOCATION & COMMENCEMENT

No official determination has yet been made on whether Harvard Chan Convocation and/or Harvard University Commencement will be taking place at the end of May. The University and the Schools (Harvard Chan and FAS/GSAS) should be making the call on these in the next few weeks, and we will keep you updated and apprised of contingency planning as new decisions and actions come to light.

CONTACT & CONTINUAL UPDATES

Please note that as we write this, all non-essential Harvard Chan staff have been asked to work remotely for the entirety of next week (March 16th-20th), and that the school would like its buildings as free of their patrons as possible, especially on next Friday (March 20th) for a deep clean/disinfection.

During this incredibly fluid and rapidly developing COVID-19 situation and response, we also expect that there will be times when the University, Schools, or even just the PHS Office & Team will need to be either closed or offline for brief periods. Please know that it is our goal to keep you informed about all that is continuing to take place and to provide you with enough lead time that you will know when an off-line moment needs to occur. You can expect us to send you at least one longer e-mail update (similar to this) once/week moving forward from here and for one of us to always be accessible and online during regular school hours.

Even when required to be or when the situation necessitates working remotely for your PHS Team, we will all still have access to our e-mail and phone service, which can be forwarded to our own personal cell phones and computers. For reference, please reach out to the PHS Program Team via the following:

Bruce Villineau: 617-432-2021 or bvillineau@hsph.harvard.edu
Matthew Boccuzzi: 617-432-2048 or boccuzzi@hsph.harvard.edu
EMERGENCY/OFF-HOURS: 617-602-8215 (Bruce)

Note: If for some reason you receive voicemail upon calling, please be sure to leave a specific e-mail message/request and to include a working callback number.

We encourage you all to remain vigilant with efforts to curtail the spread of COVID-19 – in many cases by the most obvious methods of hand-washing in soapy, hot water for at least 20+ seconds, no hand-shaking or touching of faces, limiting exposure to large gatherings/individual hand-to-hand contact, and most of all – SELF-QUARANTINE IMMEDIATELY if not feeling well and access a medical authority to discuss symptoms/next steps – before attempting to go to a hospital emergency room.
And above all, take care of yourselves – and each other. Check-in (with each other and with us!) and make sure that you’re all doing ok. And talk about not only how you’re feeling physically but also emotionally. This is all rapidly changing and can be daunting, but we don’t want you to feel as though you are alone or overwhelmed and without resources. If you need something, please reach out – to whomever you are most comfortable. One resource is definitely Harvard University Health Services via https://camhs.huhs.harvard.edu/, but know also that someone from our office is available at any time of day or night in which you may have concerns – including situations in which you are being called upon as a concerned friend. Please continue to cultivate and reach out to your networks – both peer and professional.

In closing (as one update we received put it this week): **Better days are coming. We look forward to continued contact with you – albeit, sadly, from a distance for the time-being – as the spring term rolls on.**

Wishing you continued and sustained success – and above all, good health!

-Your PHS Program Team
_Lisa, Jarvis, Claudette, Matthew, & Bruce_