

June 2, 2020

Dear UIC SPH Graduate Students,

We are committed to continuing to provide you with the high quality education and instruction for which the UIC School of Public Health is well known. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted all our lives, both personally and professionally. Although we cannot be certain of what conditions will be like in Chicago in August, we need to put plans in place now for the new academic year. We want to provide you with an update regarding our plans for the fall semester.

We have talked with students and faculty and the majority have said that the safest alternative would be to plan for classes to be held online for the fall 2020 semester. A substantial number of students were also interested in having classes in person. While we hope to offer opportunities for on-site engagement and a few classes on campus, the majority will be online, and every required course will be available in an online format for fall 2020. Your academic divisions/programs will provide you with additional details on specific coursework.

There were a number of variables that we considered in making this decision, a few of which we highlight here. Although the number of new cases in Illinois is slowing, it is still high. The majority of students, faculty and staff utilize public transportation to get to campus and could be exposed to COVID19 during their daily commute. Some students and faculty have conditions that put them at higher risk, and others live in households with those at high risk. Many of you may need to make decisions about housing soon and may elect to move or not to move if commuting to campus poses a risk. Making the decision to teach remotely means that faculty can continue to work now to develop high quality, student-centered online courses to be ready for implementation in August.

Over the summer months, faculty will be working with UIC instructional designers and SPH course builders to transition courses to the online format. Courses and webinars in online pedagogy will be offered to ensure that our classes are both engaging and of high quality. Most classes will be taught asynchronously so that students have flexibility in their schedules for work or caregiving responsibilities. Smaller discussion sections and individual meetings will be scheduled to make sure that students are engaged and involved in the school with options to participate in special social activities, lectures, and other events, as conditions allow. Our career services and student services staff are already available to work with students virtually.

We have all seen that a skilled and competent public health work force is needed now more than ever. Continuing your public health education this fall means that you will soon be prepared to tackle the challenges of COVID-19 and future challenges to the health of the public. We will be in touch throughout the summer but please feel free to reach out to us with questions and concerns. Your support team of academic advisors and the entire Office of Academic Affairs are available to provide an array of services related to your success. Our contact information is provided below.

Sincerely,

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