

From: [Erin Leazer](#)
Subject: GSSW Guidance for Return to In-Person Classes
Date: Friday, January 14, 2022 8:52:51 AM

Hello West CO program,

I hope this message finds everyone well. This is a LONG email, but it's an important one- it details the guidance for returning to in-person learning and the factors contributing to different decisions made by GSSW. Please read in its entirety. At the very bottom of this message I included some bullet points specific to the West CO program.

Key Guidance for In-Person Return:

- *Prioritize your health and safety.*
- *As DU continues to return to campus next week, refer to your instructors regarding their plans for your course.*
- *All courses will have Zoom access, including the option to join in-person classes virtually. Instructors will also make recordings of class sessions available.*
- *GSSW updated the attendance policy to allow for two excused absences in Winter Quarter.*
- *Continue to follow DU health and safety protocols, including vaccinations, testing, and mask wearing.*
- *Communicate early and often with professors and field agency supervisors about your needs*
- *Find support through GSSW and campus resources when needed.*
- *Give grace—to yourselves and to others in the GSSW community--as we are all doing the best we can as we navigate the ambiguity of an evolving pandemic.*

Dear GSSW West CO Students, Faculty, and Staff:

As of this week, COVID cases in the Western Colorado community remain high. After gathering input from students, faculty, the MSW Committee, and the GSSW COVID Task Force, we write with our guidance for how to approach the option to return to campus for in-person social work classes on January 22, 2022.

All the decisions we made are grounded in our social work values and our attention to the health and safety of all in our GSSW community, as well as the clients and communities we serve. We also considered how broad decisions about the ability to access campus for in-person learning are shaped by public health guidance, including the current state of the pandemic in [Colorado](#) and at [DU](#). We considered that Colorado's emergency response systems are currently under [crisis standards of care](#). We considered the differential impacts of the pandemic that link to ageism, ableism, racism, caregiving, parenting, and health equity. We acknowledged that many in our

community have lost loved ones, suffer the long-term impacts of COVID, and face ongoing ambiguity about how to live, to care for our families and communities, and to engage in graduate education during the pandemic.

We heard from students that you have varying worries, frustrations, and concerns related to how to safely continue your social work education. Many of you voiced that you do not feel safe to return to campus. Yet, many others voiced that you are struggling with online learning and prefer to connect in-person. We give a special thank you to the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and other student group leaders who have sought student input to inform our decisions.

Along with our deep desire to return to a vibrant campus learning community, we proceed with caution. We acknowledge that the uncertainty of what may come, and how courses and internships may change in the weeks ahead, is a great source of anxiety for some. We understand your concerns, and we join with you as we rely on our social work values and ethics, while finding ways to care for all in our GSSW community and to continue courses with greater flexibility and support. We offer the following guidance.

Absences may be necessary.

We ask that we respect student and faculty decisions to engage in class remotely or be absent. The reasons for absences may include the need to personally recover from illness or to support the care of children or loved ones, we anticipate that these absences will occur more frequently given the current levels of community transmission.

Some specific courses may remain in fully online format after the 1/18 return to campus.

- If a course section remains fully online, it may be related to faculty circumstances (e.g., immuno-compromised status, care for loved ones, etc.), to course-specific approaches to the content, or to faculty [polling](#) their students to inform the decision as a class.
- Craig Hall/Colorado Mountain College sitting areas as well as the assigned classrooms will be available for students to engage in their online classes, if they want to come to campus.
- Faculty will notify their students if classes will be (1) returning to campus for in-person learning on 1/18, (2) delaying the return to campus until after mid-quarter on February 7th, or (3) moving the class to online for the remainder of winter quarter.
- Faculty, please also communicate to Leslie.Hasche@du.edu your plans for in-person, delayed, or fully online class sessions this winter quarter before your Week 3 class session.

Zoom Access to Classes.

We ask that all faculty offer “live” Zoom access to courses that are held on-campus, so that students may opt to join virtually. Because the hyflex modality, with students attending both on Zoom and in-person, brings additional challenges to teaching and learning, we offer hyflex this winter quarter as a temporary response to the pandemic.

For our students, we ask that you please be judicious in your use of this hyflex option, given your specific needs to prioritize health and safety for yourself and your loved ones. We also hope that you will not join class remotely when you are ill—instead focusing on your health, and exercising the

options in the updated attendance policy below.

For faculty, we highly recommend setting up all Zoom sessions via Canvas so that students have consistent access to sessions and recordings. If you have questions, please refer to previous emails or contact gssw.tech@du.edu.

Updated GSSW Attendance Policy.

We are implementing a revised *GSSW Attendance Policy* to allow for flexibility and grace in Winter 2022 Quarter:

- Joining a class in-person or through a virtual Zoom access will both count toward your attendance.
- Up to 2 absences will be excused, with no point deduction for attendance or participation.
- A third absence may result in a deduction to the course grade.
- A fourth absence (or engaging in only 60% of the course) may result in failing the course. Instructors and advisors are ready to share DU resources, such as adjusting your course schedule, considering a leave of absence, or exploring an incomplete for the course. Extenuating circumstances will be considered, and exceptions and resources will be explored.
- Communication with your instructor is critical in this process; distinct options require different timelines and timely communication will help us support you.
 - If you are going to be absent, email your professor in advance when possible or as soon as you are able after the fact.
 - If you need to zoom in to a class that is happening on campus, email your professor of your plan prior to class if possible.
 - If your class participation involves a partner or group project, communicate with your peers as needed.
 - If you foresee long-term challenges with course completion or attendance, inform your instructor as soon as you are concerned.

Class Sessions Should Be Recorded.

We ask that all faculty record courses using [Zoom](#) (whether online or in-person) to offer continuity of access to course content and given the potential for increased absences. Faculty may require students who view recorded class sessions to submit reflections or to meet outside of class with classmates or the instructor in to give credit for class attendance. Using the Canvas/Zoom integration is the easiest way for you to setup Cloud recordings that are accessible to students in your class.

COVID Protocols and Safety Prioritized for those On-Campus.

Anyone accessing campus must comply with [DU COVID Protocols](#) (vaccine requirements, testing, and mask wearing). Please continue to:

- Pay attention to DU emails about any changes to COVID protocols, such as the anticipated updated guidance on masks and reminders for COVID testing.
- Check your Pioneer Web “Campus Access Status” regularly to verify and comply with

your scheduled testing dates.

- GSSW will have N95 masks available for those coming to campus as research demonstrates these masks to be more effective protection. We hope to have N95 masks for all West CO students and faculty on 1/22 upon entrance to the CMC campus.
- Current protocols do not require physical distancing, so class sizes will remain the same. Yet, students will be supported if they opt to join in-person classes virtually during winter quarter.
- Faculty, staff, and students are asked to respect the privacy of health care information, and thus you are reminded not to ask about others' health status or reasons for opting to engage online for learning.

Substitute Coverage in Case of Faculty Absence.

We have a substitute system available to offer coverage for faculty absences, yet urgent and last-minute changes may still occur, and we ask for understanding as we support any make-up and alternative learning activities given a faculty member's unanticipated absence.

Field Internships.

You are allowed to be in-person for your internships as long as you are vaccinated and cleared for DU campus access. We also are ready to support students if you need to explore remote or virtual internship opportunities. For support, connect with your field liaison.

Available Supports.

Faculty and students can connect with instructors, advisors, Erin Leazer, or the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, [Leslie Hasche](#) ([Office Hours](#), Thursdays 11 am – 12 noon) for support.

- You can access additional supports from GSSW on the [GSSW Student Resource Portal](#) and through these virtual office hours and direct messaging/chat in Microsoft Teams on the [Contact Us](#) page.
- For students seeking additional support, please consider these helpful resources as well:
 - DU Disability Services Program supports [requests for temporary adjustments](#) due to COVID-19 and more information can be found here: [DU Disability Services for Students](#),
 - Triad EAP: 970-242-9536 or 877-679-1100

Join Us in Dialogue.

Students are invited to join the GSSW Dean and Administrative team on **Wednesday, January 19th from 12 – 1 pm**, where we want to hear your feedback and ideas for how to support all in our GSSW community during these uncertain times. Please register to join using this [link](#).

We end by saying that we are committed to living into our social work values as we support each other to cope with the pandemic and journey through these uncertain times. We ask that you join us in prioritizing care for each other. Take care of yourselves and your loved ones. Seek those moments of joy and inspiration in the work and learning that we do, while also remembering it is essential that we keep health and safety first. Stay true to our calling for social justice. And, stay

persistent and determined to act in accordance with our values, with each other, and with the critical hope for a more just and joyful world for all.

With deep gratitude to all in our GSSW community for how you show up for each other,

Aneesha Bharwani, Assistant Dean for Field Education

Deana Ahmad, Assistant Dean for Students

Leslie Hasche, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Amanda Moore McBride, GSSW Dean

So...to summarize some of the key points for West CO:

- We will be returning to in-person learning on 1/22 with continued opportunity for virtual options for those who need it; hyflex will be our teaching modality for the duration of winter quarter. It is strongly encouraged that when circumstances allow, students attend in-person.
- The CMC classrooms will be open for the duration of class time on Saturdays for students to convene (even if an instructor needs to teach class virtually).
- We will be providing N95 masks to students and faculty.
- You must have a negative COVID test within the week prior to returning to campus on 1/22 and upload to MyHealth. Please note that for the first two weeks of winter quarter MyHealth will send you a message stating an external COVID test cannot be accepted, but you can disregard this message.
- COVID booster shots (or exemptions) are due 1/31.

Please reach out to me with any questions. Whew!

Thank you,

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